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WHAT IT COST

OR

DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

BY F. AND I. E. SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED

CHICAGO:
LAIRD & LEE, PUBLISHERS.

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PREFACE

As we sit in our "little soddy" in Western Kansas, to-night, with our story ended, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have tried to blend facts and fiction in such a way that neither will be the worse for the other being there, and that the two together may make a picture worth looking at; not for the merit of the picture itself, but that he who looks at it may see beyond the incentives, aspirations, achievements and rewards portrayed in the life-sketches of which this story is but a shadow.

If the Reader, as a faithful accountant, reckon the debits and the credits of Uncle Sam's account, though he gleans its items from the day-book of these unpretending lives, and love home and Union the better from recognizing what it cost to preserve them, then this little book shall have performed the mision hoped for it, by

THE AUTHORS.

WHAT IT COST;

OR

DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

CHAPTER I

NEWS AT THE FARM

The quiet little village of Mapleton was stirred to its utmost depths. The firing upon Fort Sumter had awakened its people to the fact that the storm which had been brewing so long had burst in all its fury.

For forty years it had been averted by compromises, but now eloquence and brain-work could hold it off no longer. It was no more to be a contest of eloquence and oratory, but one of musket and bayonet; not a trial of minds but of mights. The call for troops found a ready response in hearts loyal and true; but the bravest hearts throbbed wildly and the voices of the strongest quivered with subdued passion, as the question came to home-loving patriots: "Who shall go?"

"Not my son, oh no, *not* Will," whispered good old "Aunt Polly" Morris, as, rocking nervously on the old-fashioned porch, she plied her needle swiftly in and out of the hickory shirting, and peered, now and then, anxiously down the canopied road which led to the

village. "Will is gone a powerful long time. I wonder who is going to enlist? There's a plenty can leave home better'n Will, now when their new house is just ready for 'em, too. Grace would be mighty cut up if Will was to go. She's a worryin' over it now, I know, or she wouldn't be pacin' up and down the orchard. He's mighty good to me, uncommon good —I *couldn't* let Will go."

Outside walked restlessly, up and down the orchard path, Grace Morris. She couldn't sew this afternoon. Will had gone to the village, at once, on hearing the news; and, while her loyal heart beat in unison with the Nation's throbbing pulse, a nameless terror filled her at the thought of the danger to her own husband and brothers, if they answered their country's call for men. She knew Will's fearless loyalty, she loved it as characteristic of him, but the white hands were clasped firmly and the pale lips pressed closely, as she murmured:

"No, no, not Will; they won't need our boy!"

Evening shadows lengthened into night. Farmer Morris finished the chores and came in to supper and home-rest. He had not been "foolish enough to stop work" when the news of the fighting came. He thought this sectional strife might be amicably settled without his interference, and he did'nt "blame the people of the South for standing up for their rights." But the equilibrium of his mood was destined to be soon disturbed; for Aunt Polly, Grace, and Floy, were thoroughly roused, and feminine tongues were making the minutes count. Floy had come home from school in great excitement, and with the usual vim of a thirteen-

year-old school-girl had reported the whole town in a tumult; a company was to be formed at once, and a roll was being made.

"Did you learn who had volunteered, Floy?" queried Grace eagerly.

"No; but everybody was flying around at such a rate, that I guess every man in town must be going. I'll wager my next summer's hat Will will go, and your brother Clay, too," blurted out Floy.

"What a chatter-box you are! Will couldn't leave home now, just when their new house is ready for 'em. There'll be a plenty of older men to go," put in Aunt Polly, with a meaning glance at Aaron who was pretending to be absorbed in the county paper. "There, set the supper up, Grace; 'taint no use to wait any longer."

"But wouldn't it be dreadful if any of Uncle Jim's boys should join the rebels in Virginia, and some of our own boys fight 'gainst them?" said Floy, when the supper was almost finished in silence.

"Tut, tut, Floy! hush your nonsense," said Mr. Morris, looking up now. "The people of the South have a perfect right to defend their liberties, and to secede if driven to it. They are no more *rebels* than our forefathers were in the Revolution; and we never brand *them* such. There's Will now!"

A firm step rang on the porch, and a young man of twenty-three summers entered, his brown hair pushed back from a full high forehead, clear steel eyes, and a form that might have been the envy of the Knights of the Round Table, so straight and well developed was it.

"Mother, Grace, I've enlisted!"

They had feared it, had expected it, but the words fell like a bombshell.

"No, no, Will!" and, "O, Will! how could you?" came in a breath from lips grown suddenly pale.

"How could I not, when needed? When our Nation's life is in danger, it's unmanly to hesitate. Some one must go, many must go; why not I?" but his eyes turned tenderly, pleadingly, to the young wife, whose white face and trembling form showed the emotion she was trying so hard to hide.

"A hasty, thoughtless boy!" sternly said the father, pushing back from the table. "Why should you take up arms against your kinsmen, all for the foolish notion of loyalty to your country? Risking life and property, leaving home when you're needed here!"

"Father, the Union must be preserved at all hazards," promptly answered Will. "The love of home and dear ones demands it, if our relatives in the South are true to the flag of our Union, they'll not be found in the rebel ranks, and if—"

"Young blood is hot, and fiery words are cheap!" retorted he. "No child of mine shall ever take up arms against his own kith and kin and their interests, to gratify a foolish sentiment. Think well of it, sir."

"I have thought well of it, and acted accordingly; I am no longer a child, father."

"You did right, Will, you're always right," said Grace, slipping her hand in his, while she choked back the sob in her voice, "but oh—how can we spare you?" Here she broke down, and Mother Morris joined her.

"To give you up, Will, seems harder than to go myself," said his mother, tears running like rain down the wrinkled face. "To wait and listen for reports of you and your home-coming will be more than I can bear! But the rebels must be put down."

"That's my own true mother," said Will, proudly kissing the tear-stained face raised bravely now, determined to face the worst, ready to do woman's work, just as neccessary as that of bearing arms.

"Yes; you side in with him, old woman; you'll get enough of it when he's living on soldier's rations and dodging bullets; you won't talk so fine when the war is actually going on!" And with this the father left the room and the house, to go over to Harvey Morris', another son, where a sympathetic listener might be had.

Floy, at this juncture, reminds Will of his waiting supper and, while he eats heartily of it, they discuss the probabilities of "Uncle Jim's" folks entering the Confederate ranks, and who of their Northern friends would go.

"Why, Will Morris!" exclaimed Floy. "What if our own brother Hi, should turn a rebel, too!"

A hush fell upon the group, for Hiram, a son of Mr. Morris's first wife, had stayed in Virginia, married the daughter of a rich planter and had since moved to Tennessee.

"Floy, even that possibility must be faced," said Will, the firm mouth closing yet harder. "Let us not meet trouble half way. Hi has a few slaves, he wrote, that his father-in-law gave them at their wedding; but he wrote later of disposing of them. Hi was always a

first-rate fellow—he wouldn't be disloyal—at least, he wouldn't go into the Confederate ranks."

The Morris ancestors had lived in Virginia since colonial times. Aaron Morris had wedded there, early in life, a Virginia girl of boasted blue blood; but death had left him with two little boys of two and three, Hiram and Harvey; leaving them with his mother he had gone to Ohio, where he met and married Polly Wilton, a likely lass who could spin her twelve cuts a day, weave, sew and patch with dexterity, and withal had a good idea of the affairs of neighborhood and of state.

Her father, a staunch old whig, had instilled in the minds of his daughters, as well as his sons, that Union should be spelled with a big U, and states with a little s; that Union and Liberty were synonymous words; and, though Polly loved the man she married, and was a true faithful wife and mother, she never departed from her early training. Aaron, though a man born to rule, equipped by nature with both form and disposition to command rather than obey, never quarreled with a woman on politics. He supposed, of course, that his sons would fall in line with him, as he was right—he was "always right." Hiram and Harvey were filial in the extreme; with them father's will was law. But Will and Floy were of different mold; while in most matters they respected their father's opinion and shared it, yet Polly Morris' influence was felt, and had its effect; to the old man's surprise, when Will cast his first Presidential ballot for Lincoln. Then he was amazed, and even angered—blaming the liberal education he had given Will as making him headstrong.

Soon after, Will was married to Grace Osborne, the talented daughter of Dr. H. A. Osborne, and brought her to his parental home, while his own house should be completed, on the adjoining farm. Grace's gentle, winning ways and big violet eyes had won the keys to the old man's heart, as she won every one, and the breach between father and son had been healed.

Grace was truly Northern in her ideas and training; loved the patriotic songs of the flag and National heroes, loved the right in all things, being a sincere Christian girl—and believed slavery to be the most diabolical of all evils. Her father and two brothers had the same opinion; it was the knowledge of this that caused a sudden idea to flash through her mind and the question to spring from her pale lips:

"Will, who else of our family has enlisted?" She dared not say, "has father enlisted?"

"Clay and Harry both go."

"Harry?" repeated Grace. "Not that child! why, Will, he's only fifteen, and mother idolizes him!"

"Harry Osborne going to the war!" exclaimed Floy. "Well, it's a burning shame! Men are cowards to allow him to go! He's the best scholar in school, too! Arithmetic won't be a bit interesting without Harry!"

"It's bad for Mother Osborne," said Will, trying to keep a brave front, although the sight of Grace's terror-filled face almost unmanned him. "And we tried hard to hold Harry back, but he was all enthusiasm, and father said he could go. Brave old man! Grace, you have reason to be proud of him and his sterling principles. When the appeal was made, to

day, to an excited crowd, for men to answer the President's call, a lull fell; you could almost hear the hearts beat, as each man thought of his dear home-folks, and the suffering they would endure! But only for a moment, when that deep full voice rang out 'I, for one, Harrison A. Osborne!' We dissuaded him, since his absence would be felt more than that of any of us, and he gave way, saying that if the war lasted longer than three months he'd come to reinforce us. Bless him!"

He didn't tell them that he himself had been the one to say: "No father, I, but not you," and that first upon that roll of honor was the name of Wm. Morris, aged 23.

"Dear old father! Always ready to meet the inevitable, unflinchingly!" said Grace, "but 'tis so hard to let you and the boys go—so hard!" and her head sank down upon the table, making a distressing picture that quite overcame Will; he waited until his lip should stop quivering and the choking sensation should leave his throat, stroking her smooth, blonde hair tenderly; then, taking her hands in both his own, and looking straight into her deep eyes he said:

"Would you want me, Grace, to do otherwise than go, when the President calls for seventy-five thousand men?—I, with strong body and good health, quite as able to go as anyone? It would be cowardly to hold back for someone else to join the ranks and go to protect my home and dear ones. Don't make it harder for me, Grace; for it's hard to leave you now, just when our home is about completed, and we had laid so many plans for making it a cozy nest—plans that

must now be postponed. But we'll hope the rebellion will soon be put down, and home will seem doubly sweet then."

Grace was conscience-stricken in a moment. She wouldn't have her husband or brothers shirk duty. She detested a coward; and while she dreaded the absence and danger it implied, she respected the innate bravery which prompted this unhesitating enlistment.

"Will, I'm proud of you," she said, "and ashamed that I can't act my part of the sacrifice as bravely!" Then she added determinedly: "But I must—I will! You did right."

Will's proud smile repaid any pang it cost her to speak thus.

"Say, Will, you must become a General, or something big," Floy hastily said, brightening up as the thought struck her. "You'd make a fine looking General, with shoulder-straps and head-gear. Do be a General, Will!"

Will laughed at her enthusiastic simplicity; and even Grace and Aunt Polly smiled.

"My shoulder-straps are yet to be won, Puss. No; as a common soldier I go. Still, from the ranks the trusty leaders must be picked; plenty of time to think of that, though."

During the conversation, Grace and Floy had cleared away the supper, Aunt Polly had stirred the buckwheat cakes and pared the potatoes for breakfast—Floy claimed mother would do that if the house was on fire—and Will now led the way into the cheery family sitting-room. A huge back-log blazed in the

broad fire-place and threw its genial light and warmth into the room, plainly but neatly furnished, its stiffness relieved by some ornamental designs Grace's deft fingers had wrought. The floor was covered with a rag-carpet of Aunt Polly's own weaving; two large rocking-chairs stood before the fire-place—they were usually occupied by Aunt Polly with her knitting and Aaron with his papers. Floy's arithmetic and slate lay upon the table with Grace's work-basket and the book from which Will had been reading aloud the evening before. Many had been the pleasant evenings spent here during the winter, and Floy's regretful outburst was echoed by all, "that now the fun was all spoiled;" no more nice evenings with all the family, "even if they could have hickory nuts and apples still." Then she queried dolefully:

"How will we get the hickory nuts next year if Harry Osborn doesn't come back to shake the trees? Not a boy around will venture out on the limbs as he does."

"Tell us about the company, Will. Who is going, when and where?" said Aunt Polly, giving her knitting a sudden jerk, and anxious to have it all out at once.

"We may be ordered to join our regiment at Keokuk at any time," said Will. "Who's going? Well, the company is filling fast; there are twenty-seven names enrolled from town, alone."

"Twenty-seven!" echoed Aunt Polly. "Why every man in town must have joined. Who are they?"

"Well, Roy and Will Clayton, John Edwards, the new jeweler, all three of the Clarkson brothers, Jack Riley, Clarke Wells," called out Will, "but old Wells

forbids Clarke's going. You see, he has just refitted the mill, expects a booming trade and wants Clarke to run the engine."

"Old Wells is an old sneak!" indignant Floy ejaculated. "He never sends that boy to school, and they say he can scarcely read or write!"

"I think he'll go, notwithstanding his father's objections; and the men down-town are urging him to do as he pleases, for all feel that it is not because he dreads to have Clarke away from home, nor fears the danger he must face, but because it would take a cool sixty dollars per month out of his cash-box to get an engineer as good as he, and Wells' heart lies in his pocket-book. But, say, you can't guess who was the second man to put his name down!"

"Why, Will, I thought your name was second," said Floy, "or is it first?"

"Yes, it is first; you know we persuaded Grace's father not to volunteer."

"Well," said Aunt Polly, meditatively," I calkerlate it was Sam Cline."

"Yes, a reasonable guess; if he could do his fighting by standing around the stores shooting off his mouth, his name would be first on the state roll; and he did do the most enthusiastic talking of any in the crowd until he found out 'twas not mere speech-making, but that a company was actually to be formed. Then as we started toward the hall, he suddenly remembered he must chop some wood for his wife. I assure you 'twas the first work he had thought of this week; he didn't come back, and he won't either."

"Well," said Grace, "I say John Edwards was among the first to enlist."

"Why, what makes you think he would be among the first?" asked Floy. "He's the quietest boy in town."

"Yes, I know he's quiet," said Grace; "but I noticed the night the lamp exploded at the exhibition, he was the coolest person in the hall, and he was but twenty then, had his overcoat off in an instant and smothered the flames, though it burned his eyebrows and scorched his hair most all off and destroyed a good overcoat; then, when they began thanking him and praising his bravery, he quietly walked off. I tell you it is not the daring speeches that show who's really bravest!"

"Well, Grace is right," said Will, "for John's name went third and he never said a word, only, 'I don't believe in any section of the country being too big, or too little either, to hold the Stars and Stripes!' But you haven't guessed the second name yet."

"Oh, tell us, Will; I'm getting anxious," said Aunt Polly.

"Well, it was Pat McGuire!"

"Pat McGuire!" exclaimed all three in one voice.

"Yes, we got a pretty good joke on your father, Grace; when the roll was ready for signatures, he took it and was going to put his name down, when Pat screamed out, 'Faith, an ye can put my name roight under yer own, Dr. Osborne; you and I will jine her together, for nather of us heve any great luve fur ould England, and we may heve a crack at him before we gits back."

"I think Pat McGuire had better get a 'crack' at something that would make a living for his wife and those six little children, before he goes to cracking at ould England as he calls it!" said Aunt Polly.

Mr. Morris and Harvey were now heard outside. The old man had met Harvey on his way up. The latter also had felt the shock of the bombshell tidings, and, blaming the Government for not quelling the disturbance without bloodshed, (though *how*, he never ventured to suggest,) had come up to air his opinions, well knowing it would not be healthy to give vent to them in the village where 'black abolitionism' held sway. Harvey was a man who hallooed 'peace' but made no effort to bring it on. He lacked Will's force, and usually agreed with his companions in times of controversy; but, for thirty years, he had thoroughly believed in his father's superior wisdom, and now he fell in with him with alacrity.

Polly Morris' opinions had much weight with him, though, for he had known no other mother, and Polly had lovingly cared for him and Hiram since the time she had found them in pinafores, two little orphan boys in their Virginia home, and had well filled the place of that other mother they had only heard of. The coming of the two men was the signal for an excited argument; stinging words were used on both sides during the debate about Personal and National rights—words which would be recalled with hard thoughts many times in the dark days which followed. It was late when they separated for the night, and it was without the accustomed evening hymn; for all through the winter, the evenings had closed with Grace

playing some sacred voluntary, or assisted by Will and Floy, singing some sweet-home, or sacred, songs.

Sleep did not come to all of them. Floy, half bewildered by the angry words from home-folks and with visions of the war, soon sobbed herself to sleep; but Aunt Polly, when, at last, bitter thoughts were put aside, was full of anxious plans for Will's comfort until far into the night.

Long after Will was snoring in easy sleep and dreaming of attacking and routing the enemy, Grace stood at their bed-room window gazing out into the moonlight, wondering how the stars could twinkle so merrily while life seemed so dark and sad to her; stood thinking of the bleeding hearts that their own village held to-night, and piteously moaned a prayer for help as she shuddered with a terrible dread of a parting that might be forever; then she knelt by the sleeping Will, and praying as only they can pray who feel their utter helplessness and have implicit faith in God's word and his power to aid, she commended her dear ones to the care of Him, "Who doeth all things well."

Next morning, the atmosphere was icy at the Morris breakfast table, although, without, the beautiful spring-tide spoke of warmth and cheer, while, inside, a bright fire shone from the cook-stove, and breakfast itself smoked upon the table. Some attempts at cheerfulness were made by Grace and Floy, but were quenched by monosyllabic responses. The barriers seemed insurmountable.

"Guess I won't go to school to-day," said Floy at length, "I couldn't study a mite, and half the school will be absent."

"'Pears to me you'd better be there, then; anyway you're going," said Aunt Polly in her decided way.

"Of course you'll go to school. What other business have you got to attend to?" sternly came from the father, who almost scowled at all of them.

So in that they agreed, and Floy went to school, but only the History of the Revolution had its usual charm for her. Harry Osborne came at recess for his books. His mother couldn't spare him to go to school any more, as he might be ordered to join the regiment at any moment. The favorite school-boy was hailed as a chief. Harry was a fine-looking lad, tall and well-built with light brown hair and speaking blue eyes that sparkled in jest or looked wondrous deep. On the ball-ground he was the champion player, and in the school-room ranked number one. How the boys and girls flocked around him, making strange comments upon his going to the war! The boys cheered him; many were the contradictory speeches made of prophesied feats and mishaps; shoulder-straps were suggested for him and he was warned of being killed; all in good faith though, and Harry knew it.

Will took Grace up to her father's in the village, and found the whole town in sympathy with their feelings.

Groups of men talked hurriedly, on every street-corner and in every store; women and children swarmed from house to house, and, occasionally, the name of Morris might be heard; for everybody knew everybody else's business, as is usual in a small place, and, particularly, everybody knew that there was a difference of opinion at the Morrises'; that Will had enlisted and

the old man forbidden his going. The news-mongers enlarged the story until it was reported that Mr. and Mrs. Morris were going to part, etc., etc.

At the farm, when Will was hitching up, his father had said to him:

"A word with you. If you persist in this folly I'll disinherit you! No child of mine can openly defy me and wrong his own kindred! I've tried to be a good father to you, Will," he added as Will's defiant looks said, "Disinherit me, then!"

Will bit his lip to check an angry retort, and simply said, "I have two strong arms, and am not a child to be scared by threats!"

"I cannot brook this outrage! You set my dearest wishes at defiance and take up arms against your own people! Why, boy, don't you know that both your uncle and your own brother Hi will join the Southern ranks? And that if they didn't and their states were brought back into union with the North, a bill would be passed making the slave-traffic unlawful, and our people would be beggared?"

"Father, you know what I think of buying and selling human beings; 'tis not the time to discuss that now. I have enlisted in the Union ranks and I go—cost what it will!"

"Take your choice, then, but remember if you go, you cannot return to my house!"

This conversation Will told Grace as they drove back from the village, but they agreed to spare his mother the pain of knowing it.

"Father is excited now," said Will, "for a nature like his, strong and born to rule, to be thwarted, is

almost unbearably bitter. But to think, Grace, that he should threaten to disinherit me, and close my old home against me if I go to defend my country's flag!"

"Never mind, you are on the right side!" said Grace comfortingly. "You know the old saying, 'thrice is he armed who has his quarrel just!' Your father will repent his hasty words ere long. He's such a grand old man, it is a shame he don't come over on the right side."

'Humph!—there's no 'come over' for father; once set in his opinion there's no changing it."

CHAPTER II

HOME-MAKING—HOME-BREAKING.

"Will, I can't give up the idea of moving into our own home before you go away," said Grace, as they drove down the road from the village that evening and saw, off to the left, the new Gothic cottage which had been the sign of so much comfort to them. "I want to wait your home-coming there."

"Nothing could suit me better, Grace, than to move as soon as we can finish up," said Will; then he added with a deep sigh, "how I shall hate to leave it so soon! But, Grace, you must not stay alone while I am gone."

"Oh no! I'll be continually on the move between my mother and yours. I shall have a music class too, to help while away the dreary waiting time. You did not know I have already seven pupils engaged, who were to have come to our cottage for lessons on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. I had planned to surprise you with the funds."

Will kissed the tears away, that fell at the thought of all these changes in their beloved projects.

"Shall we then come down to-morrow and do the papering?" he said.

Grace assented readily; 'twould give something to do, and she scarcely dared be idle for fear of sad

thoughts. Aunt Polly objected strongly at first, but finally yielded.

"I calkerlated for Grace to stay right here with me till you came back. Your father will get over his pet soon," she said, though she doubted the truth of the assertion herself. "'Pears to me Grace would git mighty lonesome livin' there alone, and we'll need her here for company, goodness knows!"

"I'll look after Grace all right," said Floy, anxious to help "fix up" the new house, and plans for arranging Grace's pretty things already flying through her head. Floy loved tearing up and moving. "I mean to be the man of the house over there whilst Will's gone."

"That's good, Floy; I'll leave Grace in your care. You can be the 'home guard' while I face the enemy in the South," said Will, looking proudly upon his pet sister as she drew up her child-figure to its full height, and accepted the charge with a hearty, "that I will!"

Then followed a busy week for all, of papering, planning and arranging.

Everybody had been surprised, Aaron and Polly Morris very pleasantly, when Will, after finishing the High School course—they had a good one in Mapleton, and 'twas the pride of the community—had announced his intention to begin farming; and, paying half cash, bought eighty acres joining his father's farm. Soon afterward, on his marrying Grace, his old class-chum, he decided to build a home in a pretty site, only half a mile from town and on the main road to Belmount, the county seat, seven miles away. During the winter,

a neat little cottage had been erected among the spreading elms—a cozy affair, consisting of four rooms, pantry and closet. Double windows on the east made the sitting-room sunny, while shelves and brackets for house-plants were all in readiness. The spare bed-room was separated from it by an archway from which hung raw-silk curtains—much to Mrs. Grundy's disapproval, who was sure they couldn't afford it—and the two rooms could both be thrown together when occasion required.

The kitchen, with its large pantry and the roomy closet, completed what Clay termed "a fine suite of rooms," and he, laughingly, drew an outline of it, saying:

"I may need a duplicate copy when I find my wife."

By the way, the old doctor had at Christmas, made Will and Grace a present of the cash to pay for the rest of the eighty acres, so now the farm was clear.

On Friday, the work at the cottage was finished. Very pretty its new furniture looked, if it was simple; and Will and Grace viewed it admiringly. Now 'twas ready for their trunks and groceries.

"We'll have a house-warming when we get it all done!" said Floy, arranging the house-plants Clay had just brought down from his mother's matchless collection. "A nobby affair, just one final party before you boys all go away."

Grace's sad face didn't seem to approve the plan, but Floy thought perhaps she could talk her into it.

"You'll be ready to move in Monday, won't you? Not a specially good day, but it will do, I suppose; we'll have to get ready in a hurry, but we can manage

it—just a supper and a fine evening, you know; say, won't you?"

"I fear it might prove a second 'Eve before Waterloo,'" remarked Will, evidently not enthused.

"I like the plan, in part, folks," said Clay. "It would be nice to have a few special friends drop in to supper, before we go away. Floy can call it a 'nobby house-warming' if she likes. We'll help get ready—you're agreed, of course. Here comes Harry, and, by Jove! something must be the matter, from the way he hurries; see him scale that fence, and, look at his face! What's up?"

"Time's over for loitering here, old boy. We've been ordered to join the regiment at Keokuk, on Monday!" cried Harry, excitedly twirling his cap.

"Monday!" echoed Grace, "so soon? Oh!"

"It leaves little time for last home-work and for house-warming," said Will, taking the hands she clasped so sadly. "I had hoped to see you comfortably settled, but 'tis best for you to stay with one of our mothers, Grace. Bless you!"

"I'm glad to have the suspense ended," said Clay, "the week has seemed an age to me; half my entries I scarcely knew when I made them. The enemy is in the field, and the quicker we get off the sooner 'twill be at an end. We dread the starting, of course, but we're needed now. It will be hard on mother; she sees only the danger. Poor mother! These women have too kind hearts for their own good."

"Where's Floy?" asked Grace, then, looking down the road, she saw her running at her utmost speed homeward, her brown hair floating in the breeze.

"Gone to tell mother," said Will, thinking how the news would shatter even her brave determination to "never break down when she knew she was in the right."

"You won't begin house-keeping here at all now, will you?" asked Harry.

"Yes; I want to. Can't we come to-morrow? Perhaps it is a whim of mine, but I want Will to leave me here." And the beseeching look would have won o'er any opposition.

"A wise thing, little woman," said Will, "for the memory of this home and the dear girl who waits for me in it, will be an incentive to prompt action. When I've done my very best, I'll do a little more yet for the sake of that home and wife."

So it was settled that, next day, the two parental families should dine with Will and Grace at the new home; and it was a sensible plan, for it gave all something to do, the best preventive for grief born of dread.

Aunt Polly Morris baked a mammoth cake, frosted it and put a flag made from red, white, and blue sugar on the top. Mother Osborne roasted the turkey which the doctor had sent Harry two miles to get. Clay brought fruit, nuts and candies.

Aunt Polly's snowy loaves were sent down, and she made a plum-pudding for Will's special benefit; last but not least, Harry brought a large flag and draped it o'er the table. Floy went flying around on errands, and finally disgraced herself, in her own opinion, by spilling the cream on the new pine floor! Will and Grace had gone together to ask father Morris to join them at dinner. He was reading the morning paper and quite ignored their "good morning."

"My wife and I would like to have you take dinner with us at the cottage. A home-making and breaking-up dinner all in one."

Will spoke bravely, but received a withering glance and the angry retort:

"I'll have nothing to do with your wife and you!"

And so they left him. Floy and Aunt Polly went over to the cottage early. Clay and Harry came soon after. The doctor was a picture of good-nature, strong, fat and jovial, with keen blue eyes, hair growing somewhat white, though he had only spent a half-century on this mundane sphere.

Born in Ohio in 1811, when the scene of "Tippecanoe" was fresh in the minds of Ohioans, he was named Harrison in honor of the famous General, and he had handed the name down to the youngest son along with his blue eyes and sunny disposition. His wife was a slight-formed, quick-witted body, with a kind, motherly face and bright brown hair at forty-five.

A great effort at cheerfulness was made by all. Will carved the turkey and served the guests; Grace presided with native dignity, and the doctor got off some jokes which gave flavor to the meal. After dinner they gathered in the cozy sitting-room, and all sang "Home Sweet Home," and tried to sing "In the Sweet By and By," but broke down, and Grace played it with the variations instead. Then they left the newly installed family, who stood in the doorway waving adieux, wondering, silently, when, if ever, they would all meet again.

In the afternoon, Harry had seen Floy out under the elms and joined her, instinctively. She was his special

girl-friend at school, and somehow he wanted to hear her say she was sorry he was going away, and would miss him.

"Floy," he said, "I am but a boy and you a little girl. We're not expected to feel like older people, though we do sometimes; but, Floy, I want your picture to carry with me when I go away."

"I haven't any, but one, and that's for Will," said Floy hastily.

"Give it to me, won't you?" pleaded Harry. "Will can see it, sometimes, and he will have Grace's. And —and say you will miss me and be sorry when I go?"

"Of course, we'll miss everybody; there won't be men enough left in town to put out a fire if one should start."

"Don't tease me now, Floy, I may never come back again," said Harry earnestly. Why he could hardly tell, but he wanted Floy to say she was sorry.

"Harry Osborne! I think it is the silliest thing I ever heard of, for you to go to this hateful war! I should think there were enough men to go, and there would be, if they weren't afraid!"

"I heard you say, just the other day at school, you wished you were a boy, so you could go, too, girlie," said Harry, laughingly. "But I'd rather you'd be just what you are, Floy, the sweetest little girl in the world, and stay safely here and wait our coming home"—then Floy ran away, for she was going to cry.

Harry saw her brush away a hot tear, though, as she ran, and knew she would be sorry. The next day was Sabbath, a long-to-be-remembered Sabbath—the last calm, peaceful Sabbath at home—all at home. Would

another ever come? To-morrow the boys would march —that dread to-morrow!

The little white chapel was crowded on that day. People who never attended church came with a prayer in their hearts. Those who allowed trivial excuses to keep them from service got ready on time this morning. The boys felt this last good-bye more sacred than anything save that of wife and mother.

Never had the well-known faces looked so friendly; never had the old house seemed so cheery, or the memories it held so dear; nor ever had the music of the choir such a tender under-current as now, when they listened to the blending of the familiar voices. Who could tell if they were ever again to join in another song until the angel-choir—their echo soon to be drowned by the deep roar of cannon and the fierce whizzing of bullets.

A subdued, anxious expression rested on the faces of many, as ever and anon, their eyes would turn to the boy or man whose absence after to-day would mean so much to them. Farmer Morris sat with Aunt Polly and Floy in the old accustomed place. He, with stern rigid bearing that brooked no idle questioning, but wearing a complacent look still; for he "was in the right;" he was neither ashamed nor afraid to face people who differed from him in opinion, "for he was always right." Hannah Edmonds, the spinster of uncertain age who had raised Jack Riley, the young volunteer who sat by her, whispered to him:

"I should think he'd be ashamed to come to the sanctuary of the Lord, after quarrelin' with his own son, and that because he wasn't a rebel like hisself!"

But Aaron Morris had never a misgiving on that score.

Good, old Rev. Mr. Miller showed much agitation in his manner, but was equal to the occasion; he got the attention of his excited audience by reading the resting verses beginning: "Let not your hearts be troubled! Ye believe in God; believe also in me;" then using these words as his text, he gave utterance to many inspiring and comforting thoughts. The text itself made hearts beat bravely. "Quit you like men. Be strong." He showed the value added to Napoleon's forces by his faith in them. He showed God's faith in the valor of man made in his own image.

As he pictured the danger to be braved in war and in life, mothers, wives and sweethearts sobbed aloud, and strong men felt "choky;" but rest and strength he brought to them, through God, strong and mighty, who expected them to "quit themselves like men," while He brought them victory.

"Success to the right is inevitable—God is with you!"

How often the words and scenes came back to them on other Sabbaths, when other sounds than Rev. Miller's voice and the music of the choir made the air tremble. At the close of the services, the minister glanced around the congregation, looked through and through his hymn book for a last song, then turned, helplessly, toward Grace! She sat at the organ, pale as marble, but with that sweet look of patient resignation which a consciousness of self-sacrifice to high principles gives the face of great-souled beings; and Will, who continually watched her, thought he never

saw her look so angelic. Now, with a look of despair mingled with determination, she turned to "God be with you till we meet again," and, after a short prelude, sang what seemed a benediction:

"God be with you till we meet again!
May his hand protect, uphold you;
With his sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again."

Many voices began with her, but broke down before the stanza ended; few sang the refrain:

"Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
God be with you till we meet again."

Among the few voices, were Will's deep bass and Clay's rich tenor. They felt the heroic effort Grace was making and came bravely to the rescue. If she could bear up, they, strong men, would. But more stopped during the second verse:

"God be with you till we meet again;
Daily manna still divide you,
God be with you till we meet again."

Many tears were wiped away as the thought of the need of manna and resting-places too, came to careful mothers' hearts. When Grace reached the last stanza, every voice was hushed save an occasional sob—and, paler yet and with a pathetic thrill in her clear voice, she sang on alone:

"God be with you till we meet again,
When death's arrows thick surround you,
Put his arms unfailing round you—
God be with you till we meet again."

There was scarce a dry eye in the house now, for

two big tears shone on Grace's lashes, as she finished. Even stout-hearted Floy was sobbing aloud, though, at first, she had lowered her veil to hide the tears that forced their way out. She had thought 'twas a dreadful thing for a girl of thirteen to cry, but the thought never occurred to her now.

The warm hand-shaking after service and the sympathy which looked from eye to eye, though the lips tried to keep up appearances, by telling about the weather, crops, and health of the family, was another picture to be stored away in memory's garret to be brought up, oftentimes, to soften rough passions and make better men.

Floy was careful to speak to Harry on the way down the aisle, and slipped a package into his hand; Mame Edwards and Lois Miller nudged each other, simultaneously, and exchanged knowing glances. Harry could hardly wait to get home to open it, and nearly ran his mother down in his haste. He walked up with her, or, rather, she said she "ran up with Harry," on this last Sabbath, while Clay came up with Grace, Will and the doctor.

"The cottagers" were to dine at the Osborne home on that day. Harry hurried up to his room, locked the door to keep out Clay, who bounded after him to "see what was up," and opened the mysterious package. There she was, Floy herself, in miniature form! Of course, he kissed her; he was but fifteen, and he was going to face bullets, far away from home and friends. Then he read the little note:

"HARRY:—I am sorry you are going away—very sorry; though I wouldn't say so under the Elms when you

wanted me to. Here's my picture—perhaps Will can remember me anyway. We'll all miss you. Good-bye, good-bye! FLOY."

Monday morning came, and in its gray dawn the smoke curled from every chimney in Mapleton. The town awakened early, for at eleven o'clock the train was due which would take the company designated as Co. F, of Seventh Iowa, to Keokuk.

Patrick McGuire was on the alert, long before day-break, as were Kate and the six little McGuires, who ranged from Michael, aged eleven, down to Patrick, junior, aged nine months. Pat chopped a huge pile of wood and bade Mike and James "to kape it joost that same soize all the while;" put the pig in the sty, and chored round usefully.

When the time came near for the boys to go to the hall from which, in their uniforms, they would march to the station, Pat was much excited; all the children gathered about him quietly, without a push or scuffle, while Kate stood by, struggling to keep back the tears.

"An' be jobbers, ye'll hev a hard toime the whoile I'm gone, to feed them all! Moike, you an Jeems can foind woruk to do, an' faith, I'll sind ye every cint I git."

"Joost bring yerself home, Pat, safe and sound, an' ye'll foind us all well an kickin'," said Kate, using her apron vigorously, but still the tears fell.

Then came a drum-beat, the signal for the Company to meet at the hall. Pat turned quickly and the family followed him into the yard.

"Now I must be off; good-bye, Mike—Jeems and all ye leetle fellows. Hold the baby up high so I kin

see him last thing as I go by, Katie—an' good-bye—I'll come home a drum-major sure." He started, then came back three times to say something to the little ones, who cried for "papy to come back," rolled on the ground topsy-turvy, and ended in a good-natured scuffle, while Kate hunted bonnets and hats, for most of them, to take them down to see the company march.

John Edwards called at the parsonage that morning and talked an hour, with—not the parson—but pretty Lois Miller, the minister's daughter, who was sweet sixteen and as gay and talkative as John was sober and quiet. John's mother and his sister Mame watched the time enviously.

Will and Grace walked over to the old home that Will might bid farewell to his mother and Floy. He sought his father, whom he found busy measuring oats for sowing, as if nothing unusual was happening.

"Father, I came to bid you good-bye," he said, extending his hand.

The old man fairly scowled. "Sir, you are no son of mine, if my wishes are to be scorned, my dearest principles trampled upon," he said, and turned coolly to his work again.

"As you please; I do nothing but what I know is right, father; I feel it, I know it. Good-bye, think of me as you will."

And Will turned with hard, bitter thoughts toward the house where his mother spared no loving words of trust and praise, a true balm to the wounded spirit. Then she blessed her boy, and gave him up—oh, so reluctantly—to his country.

"Good-bye, Floy, darling little sister," he said

huskily as he turned from his mother's last embrace. "Be a comfort to both Grace and mother!" and kissing her fondly, hurried away, lest he should break down entirely at the sight of his weeping mother.

"Will, if you were only a Christian, I could let you go a hundred times easier," said Grace, as they passed through their own gate again. "If you put it off longer —will we ever meet again?"

"My darling, good girl," he said tenderly, and with much emotion, "I wish I were, for your sweet sake—"

"And for your own, Will. Will you read my little Testament and pray?" she pleaded.

"I'll try, Grace, darling, I *will*—I always meant to, anyhow."

Now Clay and Harry came hurrying in to bid Grace good-bye; they lingered, dreading the word, until Will said:

"'Tis but fifteen minutes until the train is due."

The boys kissed Grace, looked long into the violet eyes and hurried down the road. Will kissed the pale face again and again, then put her gently aside and didn't trust himself to look back, for tears, true, manly tears, came trickling down his cheek; 'twas well he didn't trust himself to look back for the sight of that lone figure at the gate-way, whose head had fallen with a thump on the gate-post, would have made it harder than ever to go. A buggy came dashing down the road, 'twas Aunt Polly Morris and Floy, who had decided to go down to the station and see the very last of the starting; Grace went with them, though she had thought she would see the last of Will at home.

The streets were lined with fathers, mothers, wives, children and sweethearts.

Grace, Aunt Polly and Floy made their way to where the doctor's gig stood, near the platform, where Will would be sure to see them as he marched by. Near them, stood Kate McGuire with Mike and "Jeems" in front of her, the three "leetle fellers" clinging to her skirts and crying, as Kate wiped upon her apron, the tears that would come, and "fixed" little Pat, so she could hold him up for his sire's last view.

The martial band struck up "The Star Spangled Banner," and the boys marched with steady tramp, tramp, tramp, down the principal street leading to the station.

How brave and noble they looked; Will and Clay marched together, and, watching for the doctor's gig, Will saw the one face dearer than all others to him. Yes, and mother and Floy too, and he bowed his glad surprise.

Clay had no special "sweetheart," but was a general favorite, and had arranged to write to several girl-friends; so many handkerchiefs were waved to him as he marched by.

Just behind them, with head proudly erect and stepping in perfect time, marched Harry, with Clarke Wells; for Clarke was going, though his father felt sorely disappointed.

Harry had left a note with Grace for Floy, which she was now thinking o'er and o'er. It ran:

"DEAR LITTLE FLOY:—I thank you again and again. Your picture and the little note will make me brave and strong. Your innocent face will help me do my duty better. Good-bye, Floy, good-bye! Yours for the red, white and blue, HARRY."

Harry saw his mother and Floy together, and remembered them so, as the last of home. Pat stepped with high tread to the music, keeping tune with his head, and didn't fail to see Kate holding up the baby, who crowed quite merrily.

As the lines drew up to the station platform, Doctor Osborne propcsed three cheers for Company F; they were given with a vim; and he added:

"We expect our boys to be true as steel and to stand by the Stars and Stripes till they float o'er the North and the South!"

Then the Company cheered and the train pulled away.

Away—and the people on the platform and those in the street returned to their homes, desolate now as if death had already entered them.

Grace stayed with her father and mother that night, but didn't neglect to go to her other mother, the next day.

"I will be helpful to them all," she saıd—and she kept her word.

CHAPTER III

TO THE FRONT!

The Seventh Iowa, in which regiment the Mapleton boys marched bravely, reached General Lyons' army in time to help drive the rebel governor and state officers out of St. Louis; then came the drilling and marching.

Harry had missed home and mother, and still missed them; but when they had taken possession of the city, had been initiated into skirmishing and were soldiers in fact as well as in name, he talked less of home.

Clay and Will knew by the long hours of silence, quite unusual to Harry, and the stern look on his boyish face, that the love of country, and the love of home were raging a war in his heart.

Many nights, after "Tip"—as the soldiers familiarly called the namesake of "Old Tippecanoe"—was enjoying a soldier's rest, Will and Clay laid plans to help him and make the life of a soldier as easy as possible for him.

Time passed on, and, though Harry was seemingly sociable, and even jovial among his comrades, his brother knew that the struggle to keep his home-sickness down and his courage up was a great one, until on the evening of August 6th, word ran through the camp that the next morning's sun would reveal to

them another army, but dressed in gray instead of blue.

The soldiers should have reserved the name of "Tip" until then; for the sight of Tecumseh to General Harrison probably brought more excitement to that brave old man than did the army in gray to the boy-soldier.

His eyes grew brighter, his step more firm, and his lips more compressed; and even Will and Clay showed more anxiety in their faces than did Harry.

There was but little sleep in the Union camp that night; they who thought themselves bravest paled at the thought of the morrow when they would face the gray army and stand up as a target to be shot at. They would send bullets, too, of course, but what effect might those received have? Wives seemed dearer than before; prattling of babies were heard by many in their half-wakeful dreams that night; mothers' kind faces hovered o'er many, and, if one could have read the thoughts of that army, on the sultry August night, he would have found Harry Osborne brave as the stoutest-hearted.

Marching had tired the muscles, but there was no danger to life or limb; the long hours were passed in many good jokes and laughable stories; and most men had not realized how happy were the homes they'd left, nor how stern the reality of war, until just before the battle.

But Harry seemed to forget them now, and to think only how he could prove most valiant and help his comrades best. He, like all true heroes, had not shown his real worth until opposition called it forth.

A kite must have a wind against it to make it rise,

so Harry must hear the roar of the rebel artillery to buoy him up, and prove it was not fear which had caused his lagging step and sober countenance.

Day dawned upon a half-hopeful, half-doubtful army, and the sun rose for the last time on many a noble man. War, at best, is terrible, but when men of the same country are pitted against one another, when men from the same blood stand only a few feet apart waiting for the word "Fire"—the death-knell of thousands—it takes more nerve than is possessed by ordinary beings to keep calm and cool.

The line in blue faced the solid gray one; the dead silence was oppressive. "Boom!" "Boom!" and "whiz" went from the Union lines at the command "Fire!" the front of the advancing army was cut down—but they bravely closed ranks and came again. They were met by such a volley of shells and bullets that again they were repulsed.

The Seventh Iowa was in the blue lines that stood firm, and checked the advance of the Confederate force. The boys long remembered the brave commander, who rode along the lines just back of the soldiers—behind a fence, their sole breast-works, fearlessly riding, though within range of the Confederate guns, with his leg thrown across the horn of his saddle.

Once, as he passed them, he called out the cheering "Hurrah for the Seventh Iowa. You're bully boys! bully boys!"

For two hours the advance was checked—but the Union lines began to close o'er dead and wounded comrades. Some of those who saw them fall would grow pale and turn their heads away from the ghastly

sight; some would swear and some would pray, but all realized now the horrors of war. Once as General Lyons rode along where the boys were firing, he said:

"Boys, this is a pretty knotty problem, isn't it?"

"Yes; but we're subtracting from it as fast as possible," replied Harry.

For hours still, the bullets flew, and had not General Lyons been mortally wounded, the Union force might have held both the guerilla forces in check; but now the army in blue was compelled to fall back.

The battle was over—the firing ceased and the boys found that the "subtraction" had been from both sides; that each side had fewer brave soldiers than when they went into camp the night before.

The battle was over, but the pangs of that day's work were felt, sharp and piercing, years later, for the moan of the dying soldier is echoed in the sobs of wives and wails of orphans.

For two days the army marched—the remnant of it, then encamped in a forest, and the soldiers rested in the friendly shade. Will, Clay and Harry stretched their weary bodies on the ground 'neath a huge oak to rest and talk it over.

"Just tell me, Will or Clay, what is the real cause of this war and what you think will be the end of it!" said Harry, who had lain thoughtfully silent for some time, and now raised his head upon his elbow to compare ideas.

Both were silent for several minutes; then Will said:

"'Twould be hard to guess at the effect—though the Confederates call us all *Yanks*, the shrewdest Yankee in the army would miss it—judging from what we wit-

nessed two days ago. I'd say that if this Rebellion lasts long the effect will be far different from what either the North or the South hoped for at first."

"Well," repeated Harry, "what is the real cause of it, back of the firing upon Fort Sumter?

"Why, I'd think you'd know that, being straight from school," said Clay. "The real cause dates back to 1620—doesn't it—when the Dutch trader landed with his slaves for sale; but the immediate cause was the secession of the Southern States."

"What's the excuse for being ignorant when such an encyclopedia is with you?" said Harry, with marked deference. "Why did they secede, Herodotus?"

"They claim that their rights will be infringed upon by Lincoln and his cabinet; but Lincoln has not shown himself hostile to the South, and they should at least have waited and seen if their conjectures were true or false."

"I'll tell you the cause in plain English," said Will. "The Southern gentlemen, on account of their boasted blue blood, are naturally tyrannical and bossy. They want free trade because they don't manufacture, and they want the right to carry slavery wherever they please, whether the rest of the Nation objects or not. They claim that the North has to submit, or else they will form a government of their own! They expect some sympathizers on our side to help them, but they'll find few helpers in the North."

"Well, from the way some of them talked when Lincoln was elected, I should think they'd have plenty of them," said Harry.

"O, yes; the South has some friends in the North:

why there was Jim Leland, and there was not a more highly respected citizen in the county, you know, who said, when he heard of Lincoln's call for troops, that he hoped 'Old Link would get a dose of lead before he made another call.' Of course he was excited, but his real opinion prompted the wish. My own father is very bitter against Lincoln and the party that elected him. He was more angry than I ever saw him. But party lines are broken down now; our company is made up of men from all parties—and a loyal North answered the President's call."

"That's so!" said Clay heartily. "It is not the man nor the party we fight for, but for the preservation of the Union."

"Then the conclusion of the matter is, that some of Uncle Sam's boys are feeling too big," said Harry. "I guess the old gentleman has spoiled them by allowing them to engage in a business he did not really think was right. He should have brought them under control a long time ago; but perhaps a good flogging now will make them more reasonable."

"You can't always instill right principles into a child by whipping him," began Will, thoughtfully. "Uncle Sam can bring his refractory children home again, but if he lets them bring their traps and foolish notions of "blue blood and white supremacy" with them the family quarrel is only hushed for a time. There will always be wrangling while slavery exists—and to think that my own father stands up for it! I call that humiliating! Boys, there's no reasonable sacrifice I would not make, to have my father leave the party whose main portion stands for secession and slavery!"

"Why, Will," said Clay, "I could overlook your father's believing in slavery. He was educated to it, born and raised in Virginia, where his people all owned slaves; so he had a financial interest in the black man."

"Financial fiddle-sticks!" exclaimed Will. "That's no excuse! Because there's money in it, is a man justified in dealing in human beings, and human souls? and despite his early training every man knows, down deep in his soul, that the traffic is a sin and an outrage. I shall never forget that last sermon we had at home in which Rev. Miller brought out the idea that the Savior gave his life for all men—black and white. Still, men in the South, who try to be Christians, cheat the Savior, himself, out of his recompense; for how can the negroes serve him aright when they cannot read even the Bible? How dare the Southerner repeat the Lord's prayer, and say 'forgive as we forgive?' Many of them would be answered with the lash, if God answered the prayer to the letter! I tell you a few such sermons would rouse the people of the North until they would stop short of nothing but the freedom of the slave!"

Clay and Harry laughed at Will's vehemence, for he had evidently forgotten how tired he was.

"Such eloquence!" said Harry. "'Tis a shame to have it wasted on us two boys of fifteen and twenty, who can't even vote. Will, you must take the stump, next fall!"

"I prefer laying here to taking one now, at least," said Will, smiling at the enthusiasm he had shown.

"Well, I hope slavery will be abolished," said Harry.

'The slave question has always been the bitterest in the politics of our country, according to history. Father says 'it is the one stain in our national record;' and I believe it is the real cause of this rebellion; I do hope the whole traffic will be done away with."

"So do I," said Will, heartily. "And I hope this war will close soon; but boys, we can't imagine what the end will be! Think of the President's call for 200,000 men more—and the call in the South for as many! Why this will be the bloodiest war on record if they are all called into service, and it looks now as if they would be!"

A soldier passed by just then, reading a letter, and the boys were upon their feet with discussions amicably settled.

"Mail is in, boys," he said, noticing the three; "the train got as far as Hastings to-day and brought it."

"Hurrah for the mail!" exclaimed Will.

"Hurrah for the train that brought it," said Clay.

"Hurrah for the letters we'll get," cried Harry, as they hurried off to mail-headquarters.

CHAPTER IV

LETTERS FROM HOME

The arrival of the mail in times of peace is an event of importance anywhere. Some anxious watchers are always waiting its distribution; but in war times, a pen-picture is inadequate to express the picturesqueness of the scene.

The news that the mail had come went like wild-fire through camp; and soon men with wives and babies at home—boys away for the first time, perhaps, with the fearful scene of battle fresh in their minds, listened with hushed breaths for their names. Ringing a glad "Here!" when his name is heard, and seizing the precious envelope, every favored one falls back to devour its contents, his place being quickly filled by another with expectant look. Occasionally a name is reached whose owner does not respond; but some comrade calls, in subdued tones: "Among the slain," or "taken prisoner;" and the letter is laid aside—the letter that comes too late.

The mail is distributed when Will, Clay, and Harry arrive at headquarters and eagerly wait for the post-master to examine the boxes.

"Clay and Harry Osborne," is called.

"Father's writing!" cried Harry, as Clay hastily grabbed it.

"Harry Osborne." "Here!" and he sees the familiar

writing of Guy Harrington, his school-boy chum. Two more for Clay, in fine feminine chirographics, which he puts quickly in an inner pocket.

Then turning to the M's, while Will's breath comes faster than its wont, he runs them o'er. At last, "Wm. Morris" comes, a letter in Grace's own, even, hand-writing. "That's all," But 'twas enough, and they hurry away to the tent to read the precious missives.

Will's letter was in a large envelope and was quite full. With some forebodings of the bad news it might contain, he tore it open: one from Grace, one from mother, and one from Floy. "All right then," he thought, as he unfolded Grace's and took a seat on the ground beside a lantern.

"ELM COTTAGE, July 7, 1861.

MY DEAR WILL:—We're going to send you a regular budget of news this time, so draw a long breath, strike an easy position, and listen. Bless you! I wish I might say it all to you face to face, but that is impossible, so here goes *per quill.*

"By 'we' I mean Mother Morris, Floy and myself; we are stationed at Elm Cottage, (that's the name Floy gives our home, Will, and I like it; so if you don't mind we will call it that way) permanently stationed here. Now you wonder what has happened, and I'll blurt it right out and have it over. Quite early in the morning of the Fourth, a large flag (Stars and Stripes) appeared above your father's house and flapped, exultantly, in the morning breeze! (Your mother couldn't bear the idea that her home was less patriotic than that of her neighbors, so she had put it up.) Father

Morris didn't see it, for a time, but at length it caught his eye. He was very angry; you can imagine he couldn't stand this open defiance of his will; and, getting his old musket, he aimed at it and broke it from its staff! actually shot it down!

"Mother Morris was appalled at what she termed the 'infamous act!' She knew he'd be angry, and wondered if he would take it down; but for him to shoot at it was more than she could stand and she rushed out shouting: 'Rebel, how dare you shoot at the flag my boy is facing bullets to defend!' and before, noon, she was installed here.

"The storm had been brewing ever since you went away. Your father felt bitter—was more severely wounded I think, than any of us guessed, at the time—that you should take up arms to put down as a treacherous 'rebellion' a cause he so warmly espoused, as the 'revolution' his Southern friends were waging. Mother was so heart-broken o'er the dangers you must face, that a word 'gainst the Union or Union soldiers 'riled' her. So she was always on the defensive. He didn't consider her feelings a minute; indeed he blamed her that you ever enlisted, and said hard things sometimes, on purpose to provoke her. So it only needed a little start to make the cyclone. It came when the flag went down; for then (mother never heard of it before) it leaked out in the hot words that followed that he had forbidden you ever to enter his house again, and mother left it at once; only stopping to pack some of her own clothing, and a few keepsakes, which we have had a good cry over.

"I don't really think that Father Morris realized the

crime of shooting at the flag, but took that method to get it down quickly. Proud old man! what a pity he isn't on the right side!

"A wagon, driving toward town just when the flag went down carried the news to town, and there was some excitement over it, as you will imagine. All has subsided now, though. Harvey and Father Morris had been talking a great deal of what mother thought disloyal sentiments; especially since Hiram's letter came —oh! you don't know about that! Something awful too, Will! But don't feel badly, please, Will, I hate to tell you so much bad news! But remember, Will, you're right; not from any selfish motive are you in the field; but you went as a brave, loyal citizen, at your country's call for help! Now read: Your uncle, your two cousins and Hiram are all in the confederate ranks! Hiram is in Tennesee, and I do believe Harvey would have moved there and joined, too, had you not been in the Union ranks!"

Will buried his face in his hands, and his frame shook with emotion. 'Twas hard—so hard! His father shooting at the flag he'd give his life to preserve —the flag that many of his comrades had already been slain to keep floating; his old mother driven from the old home on account of his father's rebel ideas; his half-brother in the confederate ranks! "Heaven grant we may never meet!" he groaned.

Clay and Harry nad learned the news through their father's letter, and longed to express their sympathy, but words seemed too inadequate. Harry went to his brother-in-law's side though, and stroked his hair, for Will was his ideal hero; and Clay said:

"Don't feel badly, old fellow, that's only the natural consequence of a civil war—its saddest symptom."

Will was somewhat comforted too, and soon he read on:

"Now Will, I've told you all the bad news—I know you'll feel shocked, at first, but I know you will rally and face it like your own brave self—bless you!

"Floy wasn't at home when the scene occurred, and going down as soon as she heard of it, she found mother packing up. Father told Floy that if mother went, she (mother) could never come back, and ordered her to choose between them. Floy said she wanted both of them. She came with mother, but goes back and forth. I'm glad she does, and I think mother is glad too.

"Are you feeling badly, Will? How I wish I could be with you and help you bear it. Of course, we've heard through the neighbors that he means to apply for a divorce; mother says he can have it, but he needn't be afraid of her coming back. The second morning after the Fourth, the hired man drove up and unloaded half the household goods; comforters, featherbeds, chairs, dishes, etc. Father Morris had sent them without a word. We stored them away in the smokehouse. I know mother feels terribly 'out' and her eyes are often red, after she has been out among the things; but she tries so hard to be cheery that Floy and I couldn't do less than try, also. I'll make her as comfortable as I can, Will, both for your sake and her own! So think of us as quite happy, lacking only you. Bless you!

"Now I know you are yawning, and I'll let you rest.

But wait—I have eight music scholars who come to the house twice a week, so 'tis easy for me. It pays and it helps put in the time. Now, Will, be careful, very careful of yourself for my sake. Look after Clay and Harry, my darling brothers,—but I know you will.

"How I wish I could know just where you are and what you are doing all the time! But I can only wait and pray for you. Write soon, your letters seem like gleams of sunshine. I must stop now, though I am not through talking to you. Good-bye, darling husband, good-bye. Your own GRACE."

"Grace is a treasure," he commented, as he folded the newsy sheet. "Now, mother, what do you say? Poor old mother!"

But he leaned back before reading it, thinking—thinking of home. A whole month had passed since this was written; what were they doing now? The dear, brave home guard! How sweet home, with its comfort and companionship, seems to the soldier in his bare tent and with the horrors of war, as partly portrayed by the recent struggle, passing in pantomime before him!

Taking at last his mother's letter, Will gazed fondly at the uneven writing.

"It makes me homesick, boys, more homesick than I've been yet. What! tears, Clay?" as Clay looked up from his father's letter, wherein he had been reading of the stirring scene at Aaron Morris' on the Fourth, and Will reached for the letter.

"Let me read the account your father gives, won't you? 'twill give more particulars, I fancy, and I have

the right to know," and Clay, with some reluctance, handed it to him.

"Tell Will to forgive me," it ran, "but for the moment I forgot that Morris was the father of the boy I love as my own son; forgot everything, but that the flag I loved so, and which my boys were facing death to defend, had been insulted. And I actually cried out: 'Drive him out of the country! I'll help a set of men see that he leaves!' There had already been the cry of 'Mob him!' 'Mob him!' for the news had reached town just at the close of a thrilling speech from Jim Wilson, in which a fine tribute had been paid to the flag, hundreds of which were flapping heavenward; and the excitement was now intense.

"But at this juncture, good old Rev. Miller stepped into the midst of the crowd, and, with face and manner that quelled the tumult at once, made such a grand appeal for the old man; 'hitherto, an exemplary citizen, worthy husband and father, but who made the great mistake of his life in holding to early training tenaciously, and who was so set in his ways that it was impossible for him to see when he was wrong.' He then quoted the Savior—in condemning the sinning woman—'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone,' and added, 'that in punishing this offense we would wound one of the noblest soldiers in the Union ranks.'

"That reference to Will settled it, and the crowd dispersed for dinner, after requesting Rev. Miller to warn Morris that another outbreak would not be treated so calmly! Good old loyal Polly left his house, at once —just as she should have done—and she and Floy and Grace are keeping house at the Cottage.

"There's no need for that though, for there's plenty of room and welcome for them here until Will's return. But Grace thought Polly would be more contented in a home of their own."

"Bless him! Your father is true blue, boys," said Will huskily, as he handed the letter back. "I'm glad to know the particulars. Pretty tough, isn't it, boys, to have all this family trouble, besides the common evils of war!"

"I don't believe, though, that your father realized the full enormity of the act of shooting at the flag," said Harry. "But he did it just as he would have jerked it down if he had been on the roof!"

"That's so, Harry! I expect he was angry at mother for putting it up, contrary to his wishes; and it was as much to spite her as to get the flag down that he did it," said Will, glad to find some sort of an excuse. "But it was intended as an insult to her, if not to Uncle Sam, and I'm glad she resented it as she did. Mother had the grit to stand up for the right, and for her own personal rights, too!" Then he added bitterly: "But Hiram, that's too much!"

"'Tis a regular shame, old boy," said Clay, sympathetically—"particularly for your family to have this trouble; for you all feel it so keenly."

Other soldiers entered to read letters from other homes, as dear to them as homes could be to any, and with faces of varied expressions, they read silently; all save two disappointed ones, whose letters didn't come; and they, poor fellows, walked away in the moon-light together, feeling lonely indeed, when all but they had the long-looked-for letters.

Will's mother's letter struck the right chord; it told of her deep anxiety for her boy's welfare; concealed her own trouble and feelings of personal injury under quaint, cheery expressions. This about the packing-up touched Will deeply:

"I was mad, and jerked down my own toggery in a hurry; but in the back corner of the bureau, I came across the precious box of things that belonged to our darling little boy that died, and I broke down entirely. That little laughing face came up before me; and the little grave, way back in Virginia where we laid his tiny body to sleep, I could see so plainly—I remember how Aaron cried like a child when he died, how kind and comforting he was to me; and God only knows what it cost me to decide what to do—but I divided the lock of brown curls, wet with both our tears many times, and divided the little clothes; the darling was his'n as well as mine. Never to my dying day can I forget that trying hour! Then I found in that drawer of family keepsakes the first little shoes you ever wore —I could see again Aaron's proud happy look, when they told him that you, our first baby, was a boy.

"How he loved and petted you! And now to think —oh God, 'tis hard to bear, he forbids that darling boy ever entering his house again; and for no reason on earth but that he was loyal and true to his country —my own darling boy.

"Do you feel like you were kicked out into the cold? Not while your mother lives! I live now to welcome you home. I'll have no home where my brave boy is not welcome. I brought your little shoes and playthings, and here I am at your house, with Grace, to wait and pray for you."

Floy's letter was like her, a true comfort, for she wrote as she would have talked to him. Folding these letters together he hastily left the tent that no one might see how deeply he was moved. "It is so hard to bear!" he soliloquized, though only the set lines about the firm mouth betrayed unpleasant thoughts to the by-standers. "Why must this home be broken up, and my poor old mother's heart grieved, all besides the sacrifice of lives here in battle?

"This rebellious South, which brings all this suffering upon us, shall pay the cost!"

And a harder, more bitter feeling than ever, filled him against the leaders of the rebellion, if not all the Confederate soldiers.

"And my half-brother, Hi, in the Confederate ranks —firing at the flag and Union soldiers! What if we should meet? God grant we never may! I can face a stranger Reb., but it would be hard to know I was shooting against a line which held my brother. Still I'd do it, I suppose. But, heaven grant I may be spared that, at least!"

Will remembered Hiram as a good-hearted fellow, who had always petted him, and had helped him climb many a tree and catch many a rabbit, which he could not manage himself.

That night dreams of home and home-folks prevailed, and the morrow found better, as well as wiser, men, through the white-winged messengers that visited the camp that night. Early next morning, the boys heard the guard halt some one, who called in answer:

"Don't shoot! Shure an' its meself, it is! Pat, you know!"

"Sure enough!" said the guard. "The top of the morning to you, Pat."

"And the rist of the day to yerself, sir," replied Pat, and soon reached the tent, his face radiant as the summer morning, rose-tinted and all, like a model son of Erin.

"Masther Morris, faith an' would ye be so kind as to read a bit of mae letter for me? Sure and it's a foine one from Kate herself. An' Moike—did ye ever see Moike, Mr. Morris? an' its roight smart Moike is —he was a goin' to write, too, but went to woruk a spell."

'Twas a pleasure to Will to comply with the request, and, while Pat beamed down upon him, he read:

"deer pat:—i take my pen in hand (faith an' it's a pensul, though) to let you know as how we're all well an' a kicking, only baby pat's got an awful bad cold an' I hopes this will foind yer the same. An' it's mighty koind ivery body is to mae, and the little fellers, but i can't slape nights for thinkin' of yer an' wonderin' if yer is kilt yit.

"An' i hope as how ye'll git em licked al roight and come home soon. Faith, and it would do yer eyes good to see leetle pathrick, mees Grace giv him a foine new dress, white calicoes, wid leetle black pigs eyes in it, an' shure an' he lukes swate enough to ate.

"She an' the old missus came afthur mae to go to her meetin' to talk about helpin' the solyers, an' trated mae jist loike i was a foine laddy."

Here Pat interrupted with: Be jabbers, an' yer ould woman an' my Kate are a gettin' moighty thick —Kate moost be gittin' moighty foine since I've been

in the army, a gaddin' round loike the best of em! an' it's a foine leddy she is, too!"

Pat stood, arms akimbo, leaning forward, listening with an elastic smile that stretched now into a broad grin.

"A common interest breaks down the barriers of wealth and 'fickle fortune' and begets a sympathy which counts not dress nor humble circumstances," said Will, thinking of that other "foine leddy." "But shall I read on?"

"An, hev yer seen anything on the quaen? an' Pat, do make yer self scarce if they fire any bullets, i can't think of nothin' more to tole yer about. Och, Pat an' i loike to see yer—but I've writ yer a long letter which i hopes yer'll git him shure. we got yer letter and the leetle fellers all cried for yer to come. i'll get mees Grace to fix the backin' of it so ye'll git it, sartin shure. Moike was a goin' to write to yer but docther osborne saint fur him to chop him some wood, he's chopped some afore fur him already and the docther paid dubble money an roight on the spot—just loike he was a man, moike feels awful big over it now i must close and go to woruk. good luck to yees,
Your lovin' wife, Kate mcGuire."

Pat's eye glistened with something that wasn't Irish wit as with, "Now I'll be off fur mae hart tack and bacon!" he hurried away with the precious paper in his hand.

These letters in camp acted like magic in breaking down the barriers of reserve and making the boys personal friends. That morning, groups of men stood chatting familiarly, or, stretched beneath the shade of

a hospitable tree, they compared notes upon their homes and families. Reserved men became talkative; the most coldly reserved melted into confidential talkers and sympathetic listeners.

Most of the letters were cheerful; for the brave home-folks thoughtfully withheld all mention of the hardships and the dreariness of the waiting and gave only the good news, which the already tried hearts needed.

Once, during the afternoon, Harry ventured to ask Will if Floy said anything about school, and was rewarded by Will handing him her letter, promptly saying, with a laugh that was joined in by the bystanders:

"Excuse me, Harry, for not thinking you'd want to read Floy's letter; it certainly was an oversight."

"'Tis all forgot, replied the boy,'" quoted Harry, nothing daunted, and with a merry whistle he sought a shady nook to read it.

How familiar the round girlish hand-writing looked! He could almost see the plump hand penning it, and the round face and brown eyes bending over it; while the old school-room in Mapleton with the boys and girls seated in their accustomed places came up before him, and such a sense of loneliness filled him that he involuntarily sighed. But he rallied the next moment at the thought of the flag he was here to defend, and the worthy cause that it symbolized.

He kissed the letter, looking guiltily around to see if the act was witnessed, then read it almost reverently. It ran:

"My Dear Old Brother Will: —I expect Grace has

written you everything, and of course you'll read her letter first; so this will be all stale news. But I'm glad Grace wrote about the fuss; for I don't like to think about it; it's bad enough to have you and everybody else gone to the war without having it break up the family, too. But, anyway, it can't be helped now; so there's no use blubbering over it; I have cried until my eyes and nose are red, and swollen so, that I look like a baboon.

"Oh, I don't know what to do! everybody and everything is all going wrong. How I wish the cruel war had never begun, we were all so happy before that! But I won't cry, 'tisn't any use—it just makes my head ache. I wish you were here, Will, to tell me what to do. But I'm going to do—just what I think you'd want me to do—love them both, and be as comforting to them as I can; for they both feel badly, I know, though they pretend they don't care. Oh, it's so bad anyhow! Do hurry home, Will, and make things right. Grace is as sweet as she can be; I just love her, but—oh dear! I'm crying again!

"We had a big celebration on the Fourth (before I knew about the trouble at the house, I had a fine time, though we missed you boys, dreadfully). We didn't have the states represented this time, because not a girl in town would be a Southern state!

"Grace's S. S. class—I'm one of them and there's fourteen more—sang three patriotic songs. We practiced at the cottage (Elm Cottage), where we live all the time now. Grace had been staying at Dr. Osborne's most of the time before the trouble, but always gave music lessons here on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

We're snug as a bug in a rug—rather as three bugs in one rug—so don't fret about us; but hurry home. Tell Harry we were all glad when school was out, it had been so lonesome.

"Remember me to all the Mapleton boys—I hope all of them will return. I hope you'll be home by Christmas—of course you will, though.

"P. S. Don't you go into Tennessee! Brother Hi is there, you know."

"Dear little brown-eyed Floy," thought Harry. "If she cried till her eyes and nose were red, she must have felt awfully badly; for she never cried easily like most girls. I wish she had written to me. But I'm only a boy and she'd laugh at me if I'd ask her to. I'll keep this letter though all O. K.—Will can't carry so much around, and he's got a huge letter from *my* sister."

Suiting the action to the word he folded it and put it carefully in an inner pocket. "Am I lovesick?" And he smiled half merrily, half sadly. "No! but I would be if we were both five years older." Then he took from his pocket a picture he carried always there, and gazed long into the brown eyes that laughed back into his; then said to himself:

"Floy, you're the sweetest, cutest little girl in the world; and when I do love anybody it will be you; 'sartain shure,' as Pat says. But, sweet little face, stay with me now while I stand by the old flag, and Floy —away off in your cozy little home—think of me kindly and be glad when I come home!"

He lay, the picture of easy repose, stretched out at full length upon the velvety turf, his head resting

upon his elbow; and Clay watched him several minutes, loath to break the quiet day-dreams and call the dreamer back to the knowledge of cold facts and hard action.

"Come, old chap, put her picture away and shoulder your knapsack. We march at 2 P. M.; have orders to join Grant within a week."

Harry was upon his feet with the picture concealed, in a moment, confused that even Clay saw him indulging in this bit of sentiment. But it was no time to tease, and Clay dreaded this march for the "boy-soldier," as they called him, who was just out of school and never tried his skill as a pedestrian before.

The side-meat, hard-tack and coffee was hastily served and at 2 P. M. the army moved, marching to the tune of "The girl I left behind me." The boys stepped it proudly, feeling that the "age of chivalry" was not yet passed, but that for the sake of their own 'fair lady's"—whether wife, mother, sweetheart—and for Liberty's sake, a bold, brave effort would have to be made to bring this war to a successful close and render home and country safe.

Tramp, tramp, tramp—soon to be foot-sore and weary.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

"Well," said Aunt Polly Morris, President of the Women's Soldiers' Aid Society, looking about her into excited faces, "you have heard both sides of the question thoroughly discussed. Think well for yourselves now and decide 'cording to your best judgment. As for me, I'm in favor of having the dinner all in common, but each one sending any present she pleases to any of the Company. 'Pears to me like it's only nat'ral to want to send a little special gift to your own soldier; and we can, as a whole society, see that everybody gets something suitable. Are you ready for the question? As many as are in favor of the motion may rise to their feet—be seated. Those opposed make it known by the same sign." Nearly all rise at the first call; the rest look sour.

"The motion is lost, and each one can remember her special friend or friends as she thinks best. Now what other business have we got before the society?" a look of relief crossing her face, for Aunt Polly was decidedly in favor of a dinner for all, but special presents for the ones dearest to the givers.

"Well, thin, what are we to sind, and how are we to sind it?" asked Kate McGuire.

Kate McGuire was one of the active members of the W. S. A. S., though a year ago the idea of any one's

asking her would have been laughed at, for she was only Pat McGuire's wife, the washerwoman; and Kate would have never dreamed of attending a public meeting of any kind, never been noticed if she had. But since the soldiers marched away to defend a common cause, soldiers' wives and families met on a level, for all had a common trouble, a common interest.

"We want a good square Christmas dinner, made up of turkeys, chickens, ducks, cakes, doughnuts, pies, jelly, pickles, fruits—in fact anything we can think of and fix, that can be sent without spoiling or without danger of spoiling something else—the greater variety the better. We'll make them think they've got some Christmas and friends!" said Aunt Polly, full of plans for a generous dinner. "Then we can all send some socks, gloves, mittens, kerchiefs, or anything at all that will go toward making the soldiers comfortabler and happier."

"Thin faith, and I'll jist sind Pat a pair of Pattie's last winter's socks, to lit him sae how mooch the darlint has growed since he wint away to put down thim Anglish and Rebs. An', be jabbers, I'll sind him thim three ducks and that's all I can spare, for that's all we've got!"

They all laughed at the characteristic speech and the idea that Kate was going to send little Pat's last winter's socks to show Pat, Sr., how much he'd grown; he had only been away from home since April. But Kate's heart was all right and they knew it.

When quiet was restored, Aunt Polly went on:

"We all understand, then, that we are to bring our things, eatables and presents here next Monday, take

a plenty of time to pack 'em good, and have the box ready to start to 'em next day. That'll be the first of the month and it will have plenty of time to reach 'em in twenty-five days. Dr. Osborne said he'd get the box and have it here—Elizabeth, tell him to be sure to get a good large one."

Then the W. S. A. S.—or the Women's Sass Company, as the Doctor called it—adjourned to meet on Monday with their bundles.

The next three days were busy ones; for the women of that village seemed to be trying to outdo one another, not simply for the sake of triumphing over one another, but to show the love they bore their own and the soldiers in general. Early Monday morning, the baskets, boxes and bundles began to reach the hall, and at ten o'clock all were ready for packing. The only male member of the "Women's S. A. S." was there, on time, with a box "big a plenty for us all to go in," Kate said.

"My bundle is going in last, on the top of the box, then the boys will get it first," said Mrs. Clayton, very injudiciously; for if she had not mentioned it, she'd have had no opposition in securing the place. But now many wanted their friends to be first remembered, were afraid their bundles would be mashed, etc., nobody's parcel was ready to be packed first, for everybody's dear ones "are a heap the best to them."

Grace was the first to give way, saying: "My things will keep any place, so put them at the bottom." Accordingly a neatly wrapped package was put in the bottom, marked "Wm. Morris."

Others followed, and soon the box was half full, and

the dinner was yet to be put in. At half-past eleven, came a bevy of High School girls accompanied by Prof. Baker, the new Principal, whom the matrons dubbed "a stuck-up Easterner." Each of the girls had from one to a dozen little packages. Floy and Lois (the minister's daughter) had each a secret one; the other girls were on the alert to find out what they were and to whom addressed. Both the girls thought they had them safely packed, but school-girls are good detectives when their curiosity and love of fun are aroused; and before Lois saw their sly movements, they had slipped her package out, and one of them read aloud the name, "John Edwards!"

Lois' face turned scarlet, then pale, then scarlet again, and a sly whisper ran among the girls that it "plagued the teacher, too!"

Floy was too quick for them, and her package was soon beneath others, that were larger and heavier; but none of which were to serve a better purpose.

"Well," said Dr. Osborne. "I was in favor of giving to all alike, and have done so to some extent."

Here he unrolled the huge bundle he had brought, and there was a suit of good woolen underwear for each of the twenty-seven Mapleton boys. They had cost no small sum, but the doctor was repaid, then and there, if good words and kind thoughts can be reckoned in dollars and cents.

Kate McGuire had a small package—and it was a wonder that she had anything to send away for she had a hard time to keep the wolf from the door; six sturdy children with Irish stomachs are no small family, when seated around the table, and Kate "had a hard time of

it," as Pat had predicted. Often enough her heart, as well as her back, ached when she came home from washing here, there, and everwhere. But she had a cheery disposition and tried to see the bright side of everything. She had "a hard row to hoe," but she loved her children, dearly, and who knows but that her enjoyment was greater than that of many others whose comforts far surpassed hers.

Later, she came again, with a radiant face and a large roll, all tied up neatly, with the name "Patrick McGuire, from Kate," upon it. Those who saw it said the hand-writing was the same as that in which "Wm. Morris" was written on the package which went first in the box.

Finally, they put the dinner in, and it was indeed a delicious one, for every house-wife had done her very best. This was a time when no one was afraid of doing more than was her share, there was no grumbling about stinginess, each one was perfectly satisfied with the work of every other.

But the greatest surprise came when Mr. Wells, the old miller, whom everybody said was too stingy to give anything, came over with his wife.

"I have not much time to spend from the mill, for we are rushed now," he said, while his wife dropped a package into the box. "But," he added, while a tear glistened in his eye, "I guess the boys are having a pretty hard time of it, and I'll give this to buy knick-knacks with, to go with their dinner;" as he spoke he handed Aunt Polly a ten-dollar gold piece and quietly walked out. The Bible says: "There is more rejoicing over the sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and

nine just ones who go not astray;" and 'twas demonstrated by this contribution, for over it was more glad comments than over all the rest combined.

"Well," said Aunt Polly, "we often condemn too soon; this is not the first time in the history of this town, either, when harsh judgment was pronounced too quick!"

And Dr. Osborne quoted aptly: "In men whom men condemn as ill, I find so much of goodness still; in men whom men pronounce divine, I find so much of sin and blot—I hesitate to draw a line between the two, where God has not."

The box was all ready by four o'clock; and, in proportion to the weight of the box, the hearts of those who filled it were brightened. Next morning who should drive up to the hall but the miller with his dray to take the box to the station. Dr. Osborne helped, of course, and besides the address, it was marked on all sides—"Handle with Care."

On the morning of December 20th, the express wagon brought a huge box into camp, addressed to "Capt. Warner, Co. F, of 7th Iowa—for the Mapleton boys." "Handle with care" printed on all sides of it, and "N. B.—To be opened on Christmas morning." Every Mapleton boy had, before noon, that day, been up to Capt. Warner's tent and examined the box; guessed on the weight; noticed the iron straps that bound it; read and re-read the words on the outside, but could only guess at its contents.

The five days, finally, rolled round and found the army still in camp. Christmas morn came clear and pleasant.

At an early hour, the boys all reported at Capt. Warner's tent, and the box was delivered to them. Soon the lid was off, in spite of its iron straps, and the first thing that greeted their eyes was a letter addressed "To the Mapleton boys," which said:

"DEAR SOLDIER BOYS:—We wish you a peaceful, happy Christmas! You will find a dinner here for the whole of Co. F, and a package near the center containing a suit of underwear for each of the twenty-seven Mapleton boys. In the middle of that bundle you will find a gold coin to buy knickknacks with, or anything to make the dinner more complete.

"The individual presents at the bottom explain themselves. Again we wish you a happy Christmas and with a prayer to Him whose birthday we celebrate, for His faithful guidance and loving care over you.

"We remain as ever yours,

"WIVES, SISTERS, MOTHERS,

"Of the Women's Soldiers' Aid Society,

Mapleton, Iowa."

All now was happiness and pure unadulterated love for the dear ones at home! A rousing cheer they gave for the donors. "Where's the presents?" cried a voice from among the crowd. "Give me the package my wife sent and I can risk getting part of the grub."

"Let's have the individual presents first!" said another, and the cry "presents," "presents," became the general call.

"Two of you boys assist me then," said Capt. Warner, "and we'll just set these packages, without names, which, evidently, is the Christmas dinner, aside for the time. Bless their kind hearts, they have sent a

bountiful supply! Then I would suggest that Clay Osborne be selected to take the special bundles out and distribute them."

In a moment Clay was seized and borne forward; the dinner, still unwrapped was placed in a safe corner. Clay, with a tinge of embarrassment at the conspicuous place he had been marshaled to, began unloading the treasures while the rest tried to show no impatience.

The first package was for the Clayton brothers; the next for Capt. Warner; then a neat box for Clarke, which caused the tears to fill his eyes; and so on they were remembered. The paper wrappings were torn from the mysterious bundles in one-half the time they were put on. A miscellaneous assortment of books, papers, albums, pins, mittens, handkerchiefs, socks etc., was revealed.

Pat stood with eyes and ears open waiting for them to get through and ready for dinner; for he had no idea of getting anything out of this collection.

"Faith, an' Katie will hev all she can do to take care of leetle Patrick at home," he remarked, in supreme indifference, to Will. "She's got her hands full of them leetle fellers without sparing for mae." But just as he had finished, out came a neat roll for "Patrick McGuire."

"Faith, an' that's maself, an' pass him up quick. Be jabbers and who would think ot thet ould woman a-sinding of such noice things to the likes of meself."

Before he had finished talking—but Pat never finished—Will Morris, who had seen the hand-writing on the outside, knew that someone else had planned and

executed the deed, to help "Katie" out in her bundle to Pat. Clay had already laid aside two neat packages on which he looked very wistfully, but went on unloading the box. As he called off names of others he found real pleasure in the beaming faces and glad "Heres" that received them.

"I'll hand out a few, if there's no objection, while you open yours," said Harry.

Clay quickly stepped aside and, seizing a curious little package addressed in an even feminine hand-writing, began to untie it carefully, when his attention was arrested by the disturbance at the box.

Harry had taken a survey of the bundles and instinctively taken up a tiny one in comparison to the huge "roll of comforts" as the boys called them; and had found his own name on the under side, in the round girlish letters he well knew. Without waiting for someone to relieve him, Harry tore off the paper and revealed a tiny gold locket which he recognized. He blushed as its sender herself would have done in mingled confusion and pleasure as several of the Mapleton boys who were mischievously watching him called out:

"Hello! Floy's locket!" "I know that!" "I've gone to school with that!"

Will asked to see it and without a word Harry passed it over. The next instant, Will Morris kissed a lock of brown hair which had once carressed the brow of his darling little sister. Harry jealously replaced it in the locket and slipped it into his vest pocket, realizing only part of its mission.

Will's name hadn't been mentioned, though the box

was nearly unpacked. Clay Osborne had many little keepsakes from his girl friends, but the one which brought him real pleasure was a gold watch from the banker whose books he had so faithfully kept for two years. Harry's name was often called by Clay now. John Edwards was remembered handsomely, a silk muffler with the initials "L. M." embroidered in one corner he handled with special care.

Finally but three packages remained in the box and Will Morris's name had not been called. In spite of his self-command Will began to feel disappointed, though he tried to make excuses. Every boy from Mapleton had noticed that Will, the general favorite of the company, had received nothing but one of the twenty-seven suits common to all. Was someone going to be disappointed? if so, all would be, in a measure.

"There must be some mistake," said some one. Now another package was taken up. "Clarke Wells;" at the name Will gave up hope and nerved himself to appear content. "Wm. Morris," "Wm. Morris," on both the remaining packages, made the company clap their hands, and Will, though a man, felt "choky."

Soon the strings were carefully untied and the great bundle, as if it had life and wanted to be seen, unrolled itself.

"The nicest of all!" exclaimed the bystanders, and 'twas well said. Will caught sight of a picture tied carefully between two sheets of pasteboard and eagerly took it, guessing who's portrait was there.

'Twas but an instant until it was opened and great eyes were beaming upon him for the first time, and

he read the words, "Gwendolyn Morris to her Papa. Bless him!" beneath the miniature baby.

The picture was passed to each of the Mapleton boys and was greeted with various comments. "Just like Grace," some said. "The very picture of Aunt Polly," came from others; while some could see "Grace's eyes and Will's expression" and vice versa.

"Be jabbers an' she looks as much like my leetle Pathrick at home as leetle Pathrick looks like meself," said Pat, and Will joined in the hearty laugh that went up.

"Now, boys, three cheers for "Baby Gwen," proposed the captain, "may the Stars and Stripes ever float above her!"

The cheers were given with a vim that brought the soldiers from their tents.

Will kissed the tiny face again and again, then put it tenderly away, with the thought of one more tie, back at the "dear old home." Then, taking the other articles from their places he read the names of the givers,—"Grace," "Mother," "Floy" on various ones.

Many of the boys hovered near to help Will enjoy them, among them Pat, who observed:

"Be gorra, an' the things Mees Grace sint you are loike what Katie sint me as two peas! Be jabbers and thim gals loikes things the same now, don't they?"

Then all clamored for the dinner—the dinner prepared with so much love and painstaking, each article the embodiment of a precious one's love and thought for the comfort of the absent. Over each article had been breathed a prayer for heaven's blessings upon the dear one, and heaven's protection in time of panger.

The captain's suggestion that the dinner be unwrapped and spread by the six whose names stood first on the army roll was followed, and Wm. Morris, Patrick McGuire, John Edwards, Clay Osborne, John Stephens and Charlie Larson arranged the long table on the ground, with tenting for table-cloth. The company stood around while they did it, joking the merriest since entering service. Each boy, as the dinner was unwrapped, selected what he thought his mother, wife or sister had made, and gave his reasons for thinking so. There was one large pyramid cake with the words "Peace on earth—good-will to men" on the top, and a silken flag of stars and stripes sticking from its center, so packed that when Will unwrapped it the flag stood upright and floated! It was greeted with a cheer and given the honored place at the center of the table. Something whispered to Will that Grace made that cake and planned it, and ever and anon his eyes turned toward it for some proof of the fact.

At last the dinner was ready. There it stood, doubly inviting because it was mother's or some other dear one's special cooking! It was served without silver service, or even knives and forks or plates, but never was a dinner more heartily enjoyed or more completely devoured. The soldiers did not sit in one place during the entire meal, but moved dexterously, from one point of advantage to another, reaching for "mother's mince pies"—"sister Mary's cake"—"Aunt Hannah's pickles," etc. Harry vowed he found the grape-jelly his mother had put in, knowing his relish for it—Clay, the doughnuts whose particular flavor he had tasted every Christmas since he could remember.

Pat cried out: "Faith an' be jabbers, Katie put in the ducks, fur there's just three of thim an' that was the same she had! Plaze pass the ducks over here!"

On the silken flag, floating from the cake at the center of the table, Will found a tiny "G. M. to W. M." which brought the tears in a moment, and he laid it away with Grace's Testament and Baby Gwen's picture.

There was another Christmas box that year. Far away in the North, a stern-faced old man received one which brought the tears to his sharp strong eyes.

Since that memorable July 4th, Aaron Morris had lived all alone. He had dismissed his hired man, sold nearly all his stock, and was virtually a hermit.

Harvey and his two little boys would come frequently, sometimes his wife accompanied them; but the long mornings and evenings he spent quite alone —Floy's coming the only real gleam of sunshine his dark life knew.

A man with an ordinary will would have died from sheer loneliness or have given up his antagonism against the Union and been reconciled to his family. But that iron-clad will had never bent, and now that the whole community condemned his acts and principles, 'twould have been too humiliating for Aaron Morris to give up one inch of the disputed territory. He had loved his family; he had never maltreated Polly; had given his children good schooling, and that was more than he ever had had himself; but a few months ago he was happy and contented. Will was a promising lad—how fondly proud he had been of his keen intellect and high principles! He and the boy could

be seen planning farm work or discussing interesting topics, more like two brothers than like father and son. The evenings always brought a romp with Floy, his only daughter, and, no matter how hard he had worked, he was never too tired to hold her or answer her childish questions; never too much interested in his papers to play "Peek-a-boo," or feign sleep while she would "sip up on him and teal a kiss from my papa's moufe," as she expressed it. Aaron Morris had known what home, with all its blessings, meant; had known the happiness of living in companionship with sweet children and a fond, true wife. How could he now live so isolated? How endure the thought that his youngest son was defending the Stars and Stripes while his oldest son was fighting for the stars and bars?

His wife had not set foot on the place since July 4th. Floy, at first, had come every day, and petted him and showed her love for her father, and shed bitter tears when she bade him good-bye for another day.

When Floy would not choose between them, her father and mother had made a solemn pledge that neither should ever say a disparaging word of the other in her presence, or try to influence her for or against the other. Floy at first went down to the old home every day, but by and by neglected the duty once, twice, three times. And since "Baby Gwen" came to stay at the cottage, and school had begun again, Saturdays and Sundays were the only times he was sure of her coming. Rev. Miller had been out to see him a few times and tried to persuade him to still come to church, but never but once had he complied with his arguments. He had said, with a quiver in his voice:

"No, Bro. Miller, we will never meet in a sanctuary again until we meet in that one whose center is the great white throne; where there is no North, no South; where justice reigns and wrong and oppression are unknown—where all rally round one worthy Commander, and where one great victory has ransomed a world."

Such was the state of affairs when Christmas eve came round. The night was cold and dark, and a bleak, drear wind whistled a fitting accompaniment to Aaron Morris' sad thoughts, as he sat by his fireside and listened to the moan of the wind through the branches of the great oak near the window. He was thinking of his boys far away in the two conflicting armies; of his wife and only daughter in another home than this, where they had spent so many happy holidays. Here, by the fire-place, Floy used to hang her stockings for Santa Claus to fill, and he never failed to come down that chimney; here Polly baked sweet corn-pone for him, in the oven before the fire. He thought it all over and the bitter happenings of this last year, and, for the first time since in the long, long ago when that one had breathed her life away, far back in Virginia, he bowed his head upon his hands and wept.

He sat thinking until the candle went out for want of snffiung and the fire burned low on the hearth. Then, till nothing was left but the great, green backlog which could only smoke and snap as the sap fried out at the ends.

Finally he roused himself, and striking a match, looked at the big figures on the old wooden clock. 'Twas one o'clock, and in an audible voice he said:

"Well, it's strange I never heard the clock strike;

that's the first time for six months I haven't heard the clock strike twelve."

In a short time he was locked in the soft but strong embrace of sleep.

The next morning dawned clear and calm, and as the golden sun rose up slowly, between the two fiery pillars in the eastern horizon—whose presence betokens a cold morning—its rays kissed the brow of a "maiden fair" as she tripped along the sunny side of a hedge fence.

She is at the gate now, and pushes it back just far enough to get through, then holds it until it closes against the post, lest the heavy weight should shut it with a bang that might be heard by her father.

She meant to surprise him, and did not want him to see or hear her until she should bound into the house with a—

"Happy Christmas."

Noiselessly she slipped down the leaf-covered path—which used to be kept clean by constant use, but now looked like a forsaken byway. Crossing the porch, she reached the door, and with soft continued pressure tried to open it; but no—'twas locked; brushing aside the dry vines, which she herself had planted, she peeped in through the window.

"Why, pa is sleeping yet!" she said, "and I won't disturb him. Wonder if I've a pencil?"

Finding one she wrote on her basket handle "Christmas gift from Floy to her dear Papa." Then commenced to write—"I wish you a happy Christmas"—but stopped as she thought 'twould seem like mockery, and, leaving the basket in front of the door on the porch, she ran down the path as fast as she could to

keep him from hearing the half-suppressed sobs that came involuntarily, as she thought of the change one year had wrought in her family.

The clock striking eight awoke Aaron Morris, and feeling rested, he got up at once, slipped on his pantaloons and opened the door to see the new sun; but he didn't look at the sun or even toward it, for the basket met his eye, and seeing the words "Floy" and "Papa," he instantly seized it and bore it into the house in triumph.

"Well, Floy, you couldn't have suited me better," he said, as he unrolled the comfortable woolen socks; though he knew it was not Floy's hands that had carded, spun and knit them.

"And here's a good new flannel shirt—why Floy," a merry twinkle shone in his eye as he said it, "you love your old 'Papa,' don't you?" But well he knew that Floy never took a stitch upon it. Mittens, cuffs and knit suspenders were taken out; another paper was lifted, and a sight met his gaze that would do any hungry man good to look upon. Roasted chicken, pies, cakes, jelly, cookies, sweet "corn-pone," bread and butter, pickled-apples and peach preserves—a luxurious repast to a man who usually dined on meat, flapjacks and coffee; and down in the bottom was an English plum-pudding, which was the finishing touch to the holiday knickknacks; for never since Floy was a baby had the Morrises had a Christmas dinner without an old-fashioned plum-pudding.

Floy had two dinners that day; one at Elm Cottage at twelve o'clock (with the Dr. and Mrs. Osborne for

guests) and the other at two P. M. at her old home, alone with her father.

"We had a real nice holiday," said Floy, when she came back to the cottage at four o'clock.

"I do wish the cruel war was over! All wish that," said Aunt Polly, and soon went into the bedroom. Traces of real grief were written on her usually calm face when she came back to the little family.

That night, Monday, they would have a Christmas-tree at the church. The folks from Elm Cottage expected little, but met with an agreeable surprise; especially Floy, who received a handsome set of furs and cap to match—and a garnet merino dress-pattern, much to her delight.

Grace's name was called several times during the evening, but the wonder was a ten-dollar dress pattern for Aunt Polly. The neighbors couldn't make out where it came from; but Rev. Miller seemed to chuckle over some joke—probably because he got a check cashed that evening out of Aaron Morris' bank account.

'Twas late, and the crowd at the church was about ready to be dismissed when a boy came in with—"A telegram for you, Dr. Osborne."

The Doctor opened it, arose and read it aloud:

"W. S. A. S.:—Accept our heart-felt thanks for the Christmas box.

"Co. F. of Seventh Iowa,
"per Capt. Warner."

CHAPTER VI

THE FORAGE

General F— was one of the best young generals of the war; but was a thoroughly Eastern man in his ideas and ways. Being a somewhat over-strict Presbyterian he proved unpopular with the soldiers from the West. Great things had been predicted for him by his old tutors and classmates of West Point for he had graduated with honors at the military school. Soon after he had been commissioned in the East, he gathered laurels of which an old general might have been proud, and in consequence, was given the command of a brigade in the West. A petition from his new brigade to retain their old commander, even if he had made a mistake, was not granted; for in '62 one mistake was enough to oust a man, even if he was one of the noblest in the service.

Gen. F— was brave and keen-sighted, and had it not been for the prejudice against him, and the unfaltering love for their old commander that filled his new regiments, he would have probably held his place with credit.

But his soldiers were as ill-disposed toward him as they were toward the reforms he tried to enforce. Lincoln is accredited with the remark:

"You can't expect all the virtues for thirteen dollars

per month;" and 'twas certainly aptly said. If some of the boys did grow reckless and rough on the outside, there never was an army that had better "gizzards" as Pat used to say, than the Union army of the late civil war.

The army had been stationed in Tennessee for six weeks, awaiting orders to move. Boys who had been out for a year and a half soon became restless, if not in active work—they were getting very tired of hard-tack and "sow-belly," but Gen. F— still refused to allow any of them to try for some "game," as Pat called anything besides the usual fare.

Petition after petition was sent to Washington for the re-instatement of Gen. T— who was as whole-souled and brave a man as ever wore uniform, and whose tactics suited his men better than those of the "West Pointer." For instance, when they came to a peach-orchard which belonged to an outspoken "old reb," he, usually, found it convenient to be some place else than with the boys near the orchard; and the boys always found it convenient to help gather the peaches. Of course Gen T— would then receive many a haversackful of peaches when they went into camp.

Gen. T— had never left "his boys," but stayed with the division. After two long months, he had begun to think that the merited time of his suspension was surely ended, and he notified the authorities that he could and would find employment at his old home in Iowa if his services were no longer needed by Uncle Sam.

A few days later a message came for Gen. F— to come to Washington, D. C., and for Gen. T— to take

his old command and wait for orders. That night was passed in a general jubilee in camp, and early the next morning Clay Osborne and John Edwards, with four other soldiers, appeared at head-quarters and asked permission to use six of the mules that day.

"Yes, boys, you may take the mules; but say, be careful and don't take any chances," said Gen. T—. "We can't spare any of you boys for any long time, and it's hard to tell what kind of a gang you may run into."

Then he called, as the boys started off:

"Boys, don't take any more than you can get away with."

"We'll have a change of diet, though," laughed the boys.

The mules were saddled and away they cantered. They had gone but a short distance when another mule which had broken loose came galloping after them, turning his head first this way, then that, as if looking for someone to ride him. He had not long to wait for just as he overtook the party they met Pat.

"Hello, Pat! we're starting out for a little raid; won't you take that mule and go with us?" said Clay.

"Faith, an' I don't care ef I do," said Pat. "An' is it game yer afther?"

"Oh, we're just taking a little ride for our health," said one of the boys.

"Be jabbers, an' I im wid ye!" said Pat. "I'd loike a little more health, and not so much dead hog meself; just wait till I catch that divilish mule!"

The mule was caught and without saddle or bridle, Pat climbed upon him, guiding him with a halter taken

from one of the other mules; and the party galloped away.

They found the country folks had suspected that the "Yankee soldiers" liked turkeys, pigs, and geese, and none were in sight. They stopped at several farm-houses inquiring for butter, cheese, milk, etc., but they could find nothing, though they offered to pay liberally for anything they could get. Eleven o'clock found them far from camp and still no "game." Pat was growing desperate, for he had missed his rations, when they dashed round a clump of trees, and came to a fine plantation; a surly looking man stood by an open gate. Pat rode up to him in advance, as it was his turn to "try the ice."

"An' faith an' ye hev a foine place, here, sure," trying his native art of blarney. "An' would ye be afther selling of us something to ate?"

"No!" was the gruff answer, as the man turned his back upon them; but not in time to prevent Pat's sharp eyes from catching a glimpse of the badge he wore, a picture of Jeff. Davis.

"Och, be dasint now, my friend, an' what price do you put upon the leetle badge you wears?"

At that moment two young mulattoes appeared from behind the clump of trees, each driving a fine, fat team of oxen.

"Begorra! an' what would ye be afther askin' a Yankee for the badge an' throw the oxen in to boot?"

"I have no oxen to sell and would like you to go on about your business!" exclaimed the irritated man.

"Mee bizness is it? An' faith an' it's mee bizness now to buy them oxen, an' ef yer hev none to sell I will

try Sambo. Hallo there, Sambo," he cried, riding toward the mulattoes, his face radiant with an Irish man's relish for fun; "An' moight yees part with the off ox on the near side, eh?"

"My name aint Sambo—it's Pete, sah."

"Well, thin, Pete or Sambo, as yer plaze; but what moight yer valyer the big bay ox at?"

"We oxes und we nigs all berlong ter de massa dah; yer'll heft ter ax him."

"Will thin, massa, what do ye'es want fur the ox an kape those badge?" asked Pat, turning to the scowling planter.

"I have no oxen to sell, and no time to waste with you! Drive on, boys, drive on!" said the planter impatiently.

"Hold on! Hold on!" cried Pat, riding up in front of the team, "not so fast; we must have something to ate or we moost hev an ox!"

The negroes had started, in obedience to the master's call, and when Pat intercepted them, the planter gave the mule a sharp cut with his whip which started the mule and Pat up the road at a "break-neck" speed, with Pat riding all over the mule and up in the air above, looking back all the time and screaming: "Blurty Murther!" "Blurty Murther!" "Blurty Murther!"

Pat was evidently in the greatest hurry, for presently the mule stopped and he went on, coming down with a "thump," which made him groan dismally. He was not hurt seriously though, and climbing up, started back to the boys, who were almost convulsed with laughter.

"Ye dirty Anglishman ye!" he cried, pulling off his coat with a jerk. "I'll break every bone in yer back!"

The boys opposed the back-breaking but ordered the man to go to the house and have dinner prepared for them, and all followed—John Edwards only being left with the mules and darkeys—to the stately residence on the hill, Pat leading the party and vowing that he'd "ate ivery thing on that place, to pay fur the way he had been trated." A good square dinner was served and Pat nearly kept his vow. The house was elegantly furnished; and in one corner of the parlor, upon a handsome easel, stood a large portrait of Jefferson Davis, standing erect, with his foot upon a man with his face down and the name "Lincoln" across the prostrate form, while above the picture were draped the stars and bars. The boys had suffered many very sarcastic remarks from the family without resenting them, all save Pat, who would occasionally give a telling hit in reply; but, as they passed out they saw this picture and flag through the open door which had, evidently, been pushed ajar, that they should see.

Instantly, Clay Osborne seized a chair and broke the picture into fragments, and tearing the flag from its place, ordered the planter to burn it before their eyes, and vowed if he hesitated he'd fire the house with it himself.

The flag was burned by the planter. Then the boys went back to John and their mules, taking a dinner with them for the waiting comrade.

"Boys, I'm in favor of taking the oxen and letting the boys here go, too," said John, as they drew near. "This man is a brute to his slaves, of which he has

sixty or more, and the marks on the boys prove the truth of their words."

"Drive on, if you want to go, boys,' said Clay. The negroes were eager to go, so lashed their oxen and started down the road at a good gait, well knowing the penalty if overtaken. They had gone but about a mile when, upon looking back, they saw horsemen about the plantation they had just left, some twenty-five or thirty of them, whom they knew were one of the gangs of rebels who were making it a point to capture, whenever chance favored them, any of the Union soldiers straying away from the main army.

"What shall we do, boys? we can't get any distance on these mules before they overtake us," said John Edwards; then taking a hasty survey of the country: "What's that large house across the field?"

'Dat's a 'backer house," replied Pete, to whom the question had been addressed. "Nigh chucked with 'backer, and it's good, too. Does yer smoke?"

By the time he finished, the fence was torn down and all went galloping for the tall house, which stood half a mile from the road and was surrounded by open fields on three sides.

There was no time wasted; but Pat's mule got in an uncontrollable hurry and when the others came up, Pat had his mule tied and was hunting a good place to keep his body out of the way of lead. 'Twas a large two-story log-house, containing several hogsheads of tobacco, ready for shipping, and well filled with more tobacco hung for drying. They had tied one team of oxen in a sheltered place and taken the mules into the house when the scouting party surrounded them; the

first firing killed poor Jo, who had run out to get the other team that was starting off. Pete wrung his hands and wept bitterly. "Dat am de only r'lation Ise dot in dis worle," he replied piteously.

But the boys had no time to comfort him, then, for they had to do some quick work to keep the gang from getting close enough to fire the house; the bullets came crashing into the logs or against the hogsheads of tobacco the boys had rolled together for a barricade.

The rebels were not protected, and in consequence several horses had gone off without their riders after the first firing. After a third discharge, the besiegers withdrew for consultation.

Pat took advantage of the armistice to seek a surer place of safety, for he didn't think the sound of bullets rattling so close very musical. The other boys used the time in reloading their muskets and the revolvers they had borrowed from their comrades that morning, and placed everything in the best possible position for defense. They kept a sharp lookout all the while to note every movement of the enemy's council. The party had soon divided; some twenty of them rode out of sight, while the remaining sixteen rode in single file in front of the house, just out of gun-shot. Patrick had found a refuge in the second story and urged all the boys to come up there. They in turn insisted 'twas safer below and tried to persuade him to come down and help defend the fort; but Pat's conscience wouldn't allow him to jeopardize his life.

Not an ominous sound was heard for over an hour, when suddenly a loud report rang out from the strip of timber behind the house, and it was echoed by the

wildest and most piteous yells from the hidden Pat. "Och, I'm kilt, I'm kilt! I'll niver see me Kate or me leetle Pathrick any more!"

The bullets kept coming and Pat kept screaming; but the boys didn't dare to venture upstairs, for the bullets whizzed through the cracks. After a short consultation they decided to fire no random shots, but each keep on the alert for sharp-shooters from the clump of wood and for any hostile movement from the lines in front of the house.

Finally, those in the front field, hearing the screams and not seeing any shots returned, made a charge; but the boys gave them such a malignant fire that five of them never went back, and those who did went to the order of, "double quick." Pat continued calling for "Katie" and "Pathrick," "whom he would niver sea ag'in in ter world!" The firing from the woods had almost ceased; but, at regular intervals, a shot would still come, hitting the log just above their heads. John Edwards was on the side of the house next the woods, and peering furtively around, suddenly called, "Here, boys, one of you give me something to stand on; just to raise me up a little." A bunch of tobacco was pushed over for him. "Now, now stop, for here comes another bullet." Ere the word was heard a bullet struck the log just over his head, and glancing upward among the dry tobacco leaves, vented its destructive force on the inanimate. It was the last shot for that poor reb, for the next moment John put his musket through a crack; it flashed and another soul was in Eternity.

"Where was he?" asked Clay.

"In that tall tree yonder, almost concealed by the leaves."

"Did you kill him?" asked one of the others.

"He got down awful quick," replied John, walking away to examine something on the other side of the house, avoiding even a glance toward the timber again.

The firing had ceased at six o'clock. Clay went upstairs expecting to see a ghastly sight; sure enough, there lay Pat rolling, struggling and trying to die; but he couldn't quite make his robust frame succumb, even if his will had, to fear. Clay gently raised him up, wiped the blood from his face, and each time he removed it from a different place, expecting to find the cruel work of the bullet.

"It's roight in me forehead, to be sure! Roight in me forehead! Clay, tell 'em I died a braf man, as I am to be sure." The boys had all gathered round Pat by this time and the besiegers were almost forgotten.

Poor Pete stood looking on while the tears poured down his dusky cheeks.

"Why, you coward!" exclaimed Clay. "You aren't hurt a particle, only a little piece cut out of your ear!"

They all laughed at Pat's expense, all but poor Pete, who was thinking of his brother who had died without a word. It was no little matter to convince Pat that all the blood he had lost, or thought he had lost, came from a wound measuring half the diameter of a bullet, in the rim of his ear. All night they watched lest the enemy should drive them from their shelter. But only one shot was fired the whole night long—Pat killing a horse that had lost its rider—for Pat had come

down from his hiding-place, and was anxious to redeem his reputation as a soldier worthy of the colors he wore.

At noon the following day, Will Morris, with a party of fifty Union soldiers, came up the road searching for the missing boys; they had a little skirmish with the besieging party, which ended in their taking thirty prisoners and relieving the tired, hungry, grateful boys in blue. Among the prisoners, was Joseph Billups, the bluff old planter the boys had dined with on the previous day.

Pete might have called him a near relation, for Billups was his father; but Pete added, as he informed the boys of the fact:

"Of course, I nebber calls him fadder, fur I'se dunt likes him some of course, do I allus treats him perlite an' nebber tole folks he wus eny kin of mine case he's white folks."

"Begorra! an' is it ashamed yees are of him or his skin? Faith an' I think a white man's joost as good as a nigger, ef he behaves hisself as well to be shure!" and Pat chuckled as the boys laughed at the questionable comparison.

They got back to camp that afternoon with the prisoners and both teams of oxen. Gen. T— was the first man to meet them and he shook hands with each of them, saying:

"I should never have forgiven myself, boys, for allowing you to go if any of you had been killed. Thank the Ruler of the Universe, you are all back safe, with no greater loss than a bit of Pat's ear; but he could have spared it much better from his lip."

They had a grand old barbecue that night in camp and lots of fun, all agreeing that the trip the boys had made had paid by ending so well. Many a mirthful remark and telling hit were made about Pat's ear; but they laughed loudest when it came out that his pride was wounded still deeper; for late in the evening he demanded that Clay should take back what he had said the day before—that he was a "coward."

CHAPTER VII

THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

While the boys were braving the hardships of war--unsheltered, unfed, many times; facing the deafening roar of cannon or daring the bullets of the hidden enemy, on march or in skirmish—their families, too, were feeling the evil of war in all its intensity.

Goods were high—money scarce. Women and babies left to stand the brunt of life alone, with all the odds against them.

How eagerly, and yet with what forebodings of evil, was each paper scanned to catch every stray item of army news! And oh, when the news of battle came, with what pale faces and trembling hands were the long lists of "killed," "wounded," "taken prisoner" and "missing," read, dreading lest the name they held dearest should be among them!

Of the twenty-seven men who enlisted from Mapleton, the names of three had been dropped from the army roll; but not because they had come home; they would never come home! They had "gone home."

One was reported "missing" after the battle of Ft. Donelson; two were killed at Shiloh.

The inmates of Elm Cottage were having a hard time of it, as did thousands of lone women o'er the land. Floy couldn't keep from casting contemptuous glances at the corn-cakes which were placed every

morning on the breakfast-table, and, though usually she tried hard to appear contented, like Grace and Aunt Polly, sometimes her human nature vented itself in fretting, yes, and scolding, o'er the condition of affairs.

During the spring and summer of '62, "the boys" had been in active service, which meant "constant danger," the home-folks knew; as yet no personal harm had come to them, but the dread of what news might next come was almost unbearable. Aunt Polly, thoroughly believing that work was the panacea for all evils, delved into it, and, by gardening, choring and tending chickens by day, and knitting by night, they managed to "keep up." Gentle Grace kept a brave front, but many times both faces showed in the morning what their hearts had felt during the night.

Aunt Polly felt keenly the sting of being parted from the husband with whom she had lived happily for twenty-six years and whose strong principles she admired, save that one of sympathizing with the South and believing that slavery was all right.

It was only a difference of opinion; but just now 'twas a difference of opinion that was shaking the Union from center to circumference, so vehemently as to threaten its destruction. That same difference of opinion had broken up the Morris house and family.

Baby Gwen was to them a solid comfort; the care of her gave them something to do, and, as Aunt Polly often declared, they would have "broke down complete if she had not made us sometimes laugh with her frolics." Aunt Polly loved to sit by her cradle while she slept; or let her "ride a trot hoss on 'danma's

foot" when she was awake. Floy had a romp with her each evening after school; but to Grace she was everything.

Grace's music-class had brought them some money. She had taught at her home all this summer again, Floy amusing Gwen during lessons—Floy did it well, too; it was her whole-souled way; playing bear, crowing like a rooster, carrying "Baby bye-bye," making funny faces or singing lullabys as the case demanded—but as winter came on, threatening such scarcity of food and surplus of snow and cold, music lessons were given up as luxuries not to be thought of in hard times and the cottagers' supplies grew scant.

The Women's Soldiers' Aid Society prospered, in spite of privations, meeting each week at the hall and turning out army-socks, shirts, towels, bandages etc., which proved it was not merely a "gossiping club." They talked as they worked, of course. Some found fault with other members and with those who were not members; but though some pretty serious differences arose, one great sympathetic interest bound them heart and hand to their work—a desire to help their dear ones in a common danger.

War news was exchanged freely; and when the message came that one had fallen, then hot, sympathetic tears mingled with those of the bereaved ones, and helping hands were ready to take part of the burden.

Aunt Polly never found the weather too cold or her rheumatism too bad to be at the hall, and could "scrape up" many bundles of linen and yarn to be worked over for army use even if they did have to stint and save to make both ends meet, at the cottage.

One bleak November night, the three sat in the kitchen (they didn't try to keep up more than one fire) holding a consultation; having formed themselves into a "Ways and Means committee."

"Something has got to be done, and that right away!" said Grace; "this family is just bankrupt."

"Yes; the flour is clear gone," said Aunt Polly. "We all need every-day clothes, and Baby Gwen must have a coat and some shoes." And she gave the cradle a rock with her foot while her needle flew in and out of the army-shirt, the like of which she had made a number this winter.

"There's one thing consoling about it, and that is that everybody else is pushed for clothes and even eatables," said Floy. "Lois Miller has worn but two calico dresses at school this whole term, and she's in the graduating class too. Nearly every boy in school has patches somewhere on his clothes. I don't care a fig if I have but one faded merino, and two linseys! But I must have shoes! Pa will get them though as soon as he sees these holes," sticking up the torn shoes through which some of Aunt Polly's neat darning was plainly seen.

"Pretty hard looking for a young lady most old enough to have beaux, with her hair done up high and her dresses long!" said Grace, laughing at the little toss Floy's head gave at the mention of beaux.

"That don't make me old enough to have beaux," said Floy; "unless you mean scarlet ribbon-bows—I'd like some of them; but boys—bah! I wouldn't be bothered with one for anything. I'll never put up with that nuisance! But say, what do you think!

Prof. Baker, the dignified, learned professor, went home with Lois last night from the teachers' meeting! He has been uncommonly gracious to her all the term, but I thought she'd have grit enough to hold him in his place. My! won't old Miss Ruby be vexed? She has been bowing her false curls at him all through the fall. Poor Ruby! She'll bang those urchins around, down in the Second Primary, to pay for that."

"I hope Lois won't forget her soldier-boy," said Grace.

"You can't tell about gals now-a-days," put in Aunt Polly, "she may think it's smarter to have that stuck-up city-chap with larnin'."

"Hope she won't give John the cold shoulder," said Grace. "Will writes that John Edwards is proving himself pure gold—that he's a whole-souled genuine fellow, and in the most dangerous places never flinches, even if he *is* quiet and sedate. But the house is out of order—the original question was: 'What shall we do to replenish the larder?'"

"And keep the old wolf from the door?" added Floy.

"I have a plan," began Grace, looking anxiously at Baby Gwen, sleeping in her cradle by "Danma's tair."

"And so have I," interrupted Floy, "and I mean to try it in the morning! It's to clerk in Barton's store, if they'll have me!"

"Pshaw, child! you couldn't do it!" hastily said Aunt Polly, "and then they won't need you, fur I reckon old Mr. Barton 'll stay in the store hisself now. Times is too hard to pay fur clarkin'. He'd a kept his niece if he wanted anybody!"

"No," said Floy; "she's going to get married.

Don't you object now, ma; for you would not let pa help us, only just in getting my clothes, even if he would! I think Mr. Barton will take me, cheap of course, at first, and raise my wages as I deserve it. If I can't do that, I'll work in the factory at Belmont."

"Never!" exclaimed Aunt Polly. "Never, while I have hands to take in washin'!"

"Oh now, mother mine! Don't mention that," said Floy teasingly. "Kate McGuire must have all that trade to 'kape thim leetle fellers!' We'll have no opposition to Katie started now. By the way, those 'leetle fellers' haven't been in school this week. I suspect it's because they haven't any shoes; their clothes are awfully ragged, too. I wish we were rich now; what piles of comfort we could scatter through this neighborhood!"

"We must look after the little McGuires anyway," said Grace. "While Pat is in the army, they must not be allowed to suffer."

"I dare say they go to bed hungry many a night. It takes a heap to fill six hungry stomachs like theirs," said Aunt Polly, wiping her spectacles on her apron. "Let's send them some potatoes and squashes, we can spare 'em."

"And we'll let Kate have some of Will's old clothes for the boys, too; you know we laid away quite a lot for our next carpet," said Grace. "This carpet can last that much longer. But you haven't heard my plan for tiding over our pecuniary embarrassment. Floy must not leave school; no, she can teach soon," she added, in reply to Floy's determined look. "I have a better plan, I think. Miss Leland, teacher of the

grammar department, is very unpopular, and it's rumored that she will resign, at the close of this term, next week. Indeed, father told me to-day—incidentally, but it gave me an idea—that, if she didn't resign, the school-board would ask her to, for her department in the school has run wild and is doing no good work. I think I can get the place, and I know I can hold it. Baby Gwen will stay quite contentedly with grandma, as soon as she gets used to it, and be a comfort to her, too, while Floy and I are at school. Now, don't say no, mother, for really I think it a good plan," continued Grace, as Aunt Polly began to speak.

"But, Grace, you are not strong enough to stand the task; you'd break down yourself, a-going out in all sorts of weather, wading through snow-drifts to your eyes, and then keeping those unruly boys all day, besides being away from Baby Gwen. You'd be sure to break down! It won't do; it won't do!" and Aunt Polly shook her head decidedly.

"No, Grace, I'm the man of the house since Will's gone! Didn't I tell him that I would be? and that I'd take care of you?" said Floy. "I'm the one to go forth and seek our fortune. I just wish I could teach. I don't suppose they'd trust a girl not quite fifteen to boss those bad boys; but I'd just like to try it a while."

"You'd play with them, I have an idea," said Grace. "But I can teach, I feel sure, and the days wouldn't be very long, with Baby Gwen to give me rest in the evenings."

"But I want to do something; I'd feel sneaking to allow you to feed and clothe us all," said Floy spiritedly. "I've thought lots about it and—"

"When Will comes home he must find us all together and Floy in school," said Grace. "Let me have my way now; it really is the best, in fact the only way, that will do at all. I'll see father to-morrow and apply through him."

On the way down, next day, she stopped at Pat McGuire's humble dwelling, found the "leetle fellers" scattered promiscuously around—Mike washing; "Jeems" busily engaged pulling old Tabby's tail to hear her mew; some others turning somersaults on the bed and poor Kate crying over little Patrick.

"Faith, and it was roight kint of yees to cum," she said, wiping a chair with her apron and offering it to her visitor; "leetle Patherick hain't well at all, at all; and I can't get much wurruck either. Ivery body is a thrying to do their own washin', an' how kin I ever kape my leetle fellers worrum this cold weather, and git 'em enough to ate?" and she broke down entirely. It was a dreary outlook, and Grace pitied her deeply.

"I don't wonder that you get discouraged sometimes," she said comfortingly; "you try so hard!"

She took little Patrick and examined the swollen gums, while she measured Mike and Jeems with her eye. "Come up to the cottage soon, Katie; Will has quite a number of old clothes, which are worn out in places, but quite good in the main, out of which we can make some pantaloons and coats for the boys; and we'll find something for little Patrick, too."

"An' ye'es a born seraph, sure, mum. Bless yer kint heart!" cried Kate, her face clearing like an April day.

An' it's meself will cum. I'll do anything to kape em' all roight!"

Soon Grace went on, wondering how they could be furnished with shoes, leaving a gleam of sunshine in the McGuire home. Mrs. Osborne objected to the teaching strongly at first, but was won over by the doctor, who thought 'twould be an excellent remedy for the "blues," and would occupy the time well until the boys should come home.

In a week, Grace Morris was a schoolma'am. She whipped three boys the first day, though she had always opposed corporal punishment in school. She had said many times that if she was teaching, she'd govern by kindness "ruling with an iron hand perhaps, but covered with a velvet glove." Though she pulled the glove off the first day, she soon brought order out of chaos and won the respect and love of the whole school.

Monday morning of the second week, a new scholar entered. It was Mike McGuire, with a beaming face, good clothes and a brand-new pair of shoes.

"Faith an' I found me shoes a hangin' on the door-knob this very morning, with me name on the bottom, an its' a noice pair they are, too!" was Mike's answer to the question about where he got them.

Grace wondered who the good fairy could be, and would have known could she have seen the old doctor's satisfied chuckle, as, driving by, he saw Mike running to school that morning, the new shoes lifted high then brought down with triumphant clatter. Mike was a bright Irish lad, and Grace helped him all the more when she remembered that his father was a Union soldier in the same company as her own dear Will. Baby Gwen queened it right royally at the cot-

tage, and, on pleasant days, drove with her grandpa down to see her "ozzer danma." She always returned home, loaded with toys and candy, in time to meet Grace and Floy as they came from school; every evening, she toddled toward them, her little arms extended, and a glad—"my mamma and my Foy!"

Then such a treat as she proved to be, through all out-of-school hours, and her, "No, no, my mamma go to kool," as Grace began wrapping for her next going, would be echoed all day!

CHAPTER VIII

PICKET DUTY

It was a dark night, late in November of '62, and Will Morris took his beat on picket duty at 2, A. M. He was on the lookout for spies, for Gen. T— with about ten thousand men was not more than three miles from Van Dorn's camp. That Confederate general having left the main army with Price, was hovering about Grant's rear, and Gen. T— had been sent back to watch him. Neither army knew the strength of the other, though there had been several skirmishes; and each was waiting for the other to make the attack.

During the first half hour of young Morris' vigil, no sound was heard to break the stillness, save that of the wind as it rocked the huge trees on the hill-side. Presently the sharp crack of a revolver was heard, further down the ridge, and ere it's echo died another report resounded, on the other side of him. Expecting some excitement at least, Will examined his own revolver and drew his musket in position to use if necessary.

"Why that's Van Dorn's whole army if it's any of them," he said half aloud, stopping on his beat to listen to the crashing sound from the hill-top. "The moon is just coming up; they'll have the advantage of me in being on the west. But I'll have one in being

on low ground while they are on high, so I won't signal for help just yet."

But a familiar sound told him 'twas but hogs on the hill eating nuts. They came on, and suddenly one of them gave a big "boo-oo," as if something was the matter; nearer still they came and Will could see the dark forms as they hunted around for nuts. "Boo-oo!" went the old sow once more, and this time they all gathered into a bunch, grunting in a frightened way and making the noise Will had often heard them make when, at his father's farm, one had been hurt or made to squeal. Again they separated and were soon hunting and rooting in the dry leaves, but a few steps from where Will stood leaning against a tree. He watched them so quietly that many had passed him, on either side of the tree, without noticing him. Now as they came on he saw two, lagging behind and somewhat apart from the rest; he also noticed that they didn't root and rattle the leaves in the usual swine manner.

Then down the line another musket-shot was heard and both the hind hogs stopped, while the others came unconcernedly on.

"Well, swine," thought Will, "you must root hog or die, when you get a few paces nearer."

He raised his musket to his face, keeping close to the tree, so that they should not see him move, and watching, pulled almost hard enough to do the work; then hesitated.

Was it Providence that prompted the hesitation?

"It would be cowardly to shoot a man in cold blood," he thought. "Yet there's two of them and I am taking a risk," and he stood a full minute scarcely breathing.

It then occurred to him to speak, and at the same time to step to one side of the tree, sheltering himself from the one and covering the other with his musket; for he stood between them and but a few feet from either.

"Hold up your hands, or you're a dead hog!" he cried. At once the hog addressed was transformed into a biped, with its hands uplifted; for the musket almost against him added an argument of irresistible force.

"Now," said Will to the one on the other side, "don't you move a muscle or your pard is shot instantly. Now hold those hands a little higher and step this way."

The man obeyed, and though it took all his mathematical powers to do it, Will adjusted the critical state of affairs by making the man walk up to him. Then taking his arms away from him with one hand while he held a cocked revolver in the other, he marched him out from the shelter and stepped behind him.

"For God's sake don't shoot!" said Mr. Swine No. 1 to Mr. Swine No. 2, as Will marched him toward the unarmed one. But the appeal was unnecessary; for No. 2 had his hands up.

Soon Will Morris was standing a few feet from the unarmed men telling them not to tremble so; for they would not be harmed if they obeyed orders. Then he fired a signal for help.

Now boys," said Will, "while help is coming, you may just give me your biographies."

They hesitated but a moment, for the whole thing

had been done so quickly that they scarcely realized what they were doing.

"My name is James Murphy. I am from Mississippi," said the one who last surrendered.

"How long have you been out?" asked Will.

"I just enlisted a few days ago."

"Have you a family?"

"No, sir."

"Well, my friend," he said, turning to the other, "you came very near death's door; but since I didn't pull the trigger you may give me a short account of why you are here.

"I am here to defend my property," was the prompt reply.

"What property?" asked Will.

"My niggers, sir."

"Pray where did you get your 'niggers' and what right have you to them?"

"Well, sir, a part of them I bought at a public auction just before the election of Lincoln, and paid more for them than any one else would pay. That's where I got them—what right have I to them? I have a bill of sale for them all clear but four hundred dollars mortgage on two of them. But any day I could have sold one of them for that amount and two hundred dollars more. The rest were given to me, or rather, to my wife, by her father."

"Then you are here for the sole purpose of defending those slaves, are you?" asked Will.

"That is, of course, the principal reason for which I espouse the cause of the young Confederacy. But besides that traffic, all our rights are trampled upon

by the North, whose interests conflict with ours."

"Don't you have the same constitution to defend you that we have? Haven't you always had equal rights in both houses of Congress, and more too, by counting part of what you term your property in making up your representation? Virginia has had more presidents than any other state of the Union. You have always had your share and more too; that's what is the matter with you now. But who are you?"

"My name is Morris—Hiram Morris."

"Morris—Hiram Morris!" repeated Will, aghast. "Great Heavens! Are you a son of Aaron Morris, of Iowa?"

"I am a son of Aaron Morris, of Mapleton, Iowa. He moved there sixteen years ago from Virginia," replied the man surprised at the agitation of his captor.

"I, also, am a son of Aaron Morris of Mapleton, Iowa, and a brother of the man at whom a few minutes ago I was pointing the weapon of death!" A silence fell for a moment, that painful silence that can almost be felt. "What can I do? I hate to give my own brother up to be a prisoner of war!"

At this, both brothers broke down; and the Gray and the Blue—over whom, when little boys, Polly Morris had watched during sickness; they who had chased rabbits together in the long ago; now bearded men fighting for different principles, held each other's hands and wept as memory crossed the chasm of years and different surroundings and made them the youth and child again in the old Virginia home.

Will was the first to speak.

"My brother," said he, "you are on the wrong side.

For the sake of your brother, your sister and the mother who cared for you until your manhood, go home; for the sake of heaven where there are no slaves, for the sake of your wife and your own children whose freedom and happiness you prize above everything else, release your slaves and earn your bread by the sweat of your brow; and don't make someone else earn it for you! Will you go home? I will parole you and you may go. Will you accept? Say yes, say yes! Don't compel me to take you in as a prisoner!"

"Well, parole me, and I will go home!" said Hiram, and again they clasped hands.

Will had never seen anyone paroled and didn't know the exact oath, but knew the substance and ventured in good faith.

"Remove your hat," he said, in pale solemnity; "hold up your right hand."

The other silently obeyed, only the pallor which overspread his bronzed face betrayed his emotion.

"Do you hold up that hand, in the sight of God and man, as a sign that you will never again bear arms against the Union or give aid in any way to the so-called Confederacy, so help you God?"

"I do!" answered Hiram Morris, in low but firm tones. The oath was administered—that strange oath, witnessed only by the other prisoner and Him who knoweth heart-vows and in Whose name it was uttered. A strange picture they made, these brothers, in the dense forest, the cold moon lighting the scene—the one, young, almost boyish-looking, swearing the man past middle-age, tall and commanding—"never again to take up arms 'gainst the Union." The oath was just given

and Hiram had not had time to leave the spot, when up dashed Lieut. Wiley with ten men.

"Sentry, wasn't it you who signaled for help?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Yes sir; I needed help and still have a man here who is, I suppose, a prisoner of war," replied Will.

"Why, did these two men come up and surrender?" asked Lieut. Wiley in a half sarcastic tone.

"No sir, not exactly; but—"

Lieut. Wiley here stopped his story by saying:

"No time for explanations now. Men, conduct those prisoners to head-quarters with the word that Lieut. Wiley sent them."

Lieut. Wiley was secretly chagrined that Will Morris displayed such valor, for he was already jealous of his growing popularity among the soldiers and feared he (Morris) might be recommended as Captain when Capt. Warner should be promoted—which promotion was expected soon. Now Lieut. Wiley had some aspiration for that position and showed no favor to private Morris, whom he knew stood higher in the estimation of the company than his commissioned self.

"Hold on, lieutenant," said Will, "the one man is paroled and has the right to go home."

"Who paroled him?" demanded the Lieutenant. "And by what authority?"

"I paroled him, sir," said Will undauntedly, "and while I may have taken a liberty that needs explanation I think I can make it satisfactory to the General."

"You will make it satisfactory to me," roared the indignant lieutenant, "or be sent in with the prisoners under arrest!"

"Mr. Wiley," began Will.

"Call me lieutenant, impudence!"

"I shall call you nothing but overbearing, headstrong Wiley, and shall make no explanations whatever to you." And Will turned coolly away.

"Sir! Lieutenant Wiley arrests you for disobedience and insubordination! Men, conduct him to head-quarters."

"Gentlemen, I'm a soldier. I try to be a good one, and I ask you not to disturb me, as I am on duty now," was Will's appeal to the men themselves.

Not a man stirred, though the lieutenant ordered them a second time; but he didn't dare send them all in for disobedience.

"I shall report you myself then, at once!" he said enraged. "Men, conduct the prisoners to headquarters." And the party went back with the two prisoners—Lieutenant Wiley galloping ahead, somewhat irritated, but on the whole pleased that the scene had occurred. He thought this field-parole and this act of insubordination would destroy the last vestige of a chance for Morris to rise.

Before leaving the main army, they had received the following order from Grant: "No paroling unless it be imperative, until further orders." The lieutenant thought it could not be an imperative case, since both men had evidently laid down their arms; besides the private had been insubordinate, even impudent.

At head-quarters, he made good use of the pronoun "I" in reporting the capture of the prisoners, but did his best to give Wm. Morris the credit of the parole.

"One of our men, Private Morris, on picket at No.

10, paroled this man; but I got out there with my men just in time to prevent his escape. Morris had disregarded Gen. Grant's orders and paroled him; it was unnecessary; for the men made no resistance; still he refused to obey my orders in a very impudent manner."

"What were your orders, Lieut. Wiley, which he disobeyed?" asked Gen. T— quietly.

"My order was for him to report to you, at once, and give satisfactory explanation for disregarding Gen. Grant's order." Though some of the men looked surprised at this version of the incident, he went on: "Will you send for him at once and teach him to know his place and keep it, too!"

"We must not be too rigid, Lieut. Wiley," observed Gen. T—, deliberately weighing the facts as reported. "There is not a truer, nobler soldier in the ranks than Wm. Morris; and I understand he enlisted against his father's will and has had much subsequent trouble over it."

"I knew it, I knew it!" exclaimed the older prisoner.

They all noticed what he said, but paid no further attention to it.

"I think," continued Gen. T—, "that Morris can probably give good reasons for disobeying Gen. Grant's orders, if he has really done so. We will not disturb him now; he will soon be relieved from duty and will then report."

Lieut. Wiley looked displeased. The sun was just peeping over the hills and, while they were yet talking, Wm. Morris came in from duty.

"Gen. T—, may I have a word with you in private," asked Will. And in the clear, frank eye which met

his Gen. T— saw nothing unmanly or deceptive.

They drew apart, and after a short interview, Gen. T— returned, clearing his throat vehemently.

"Sir," he said addressing the gray-coated Morris, "you have been paroled and are to go home, laying down your arms. Go; may you be forgiven, for your brother's sake!"

Hiram Morris cast one grateful glance toward the manly form at the back of the tent, which had not dared to join again the group, turned and left the camp.

Lieut. Wiley rode slowly away, only saying to one of the soldiers:

"We'll see if Gen. Grant approves disobedience from Morris, or Gen. T— either."

Will was joined by some comrades from Co. F, when a messenger came dashing up toward Gen. T—; they heard him say:

"The rebs are upon us! Posts No. 9 and No. 11 both found dead and the rebs are now at the top of yonder hill!"

There was some quick work and brave fighting in the next two hours, and Gen. Van Dorn was driven back.

Co. F, with Capt. Warner at its head, had done good service, and Gen. T— wrote down in his day-book: "Capt. Warner of Co. F, Seventh Iowa, will be promoted soon. Wm. Morris of Co. F, private, took two prisoners at picket post No. 10. Nos. 9 and 11 were both found dead on duty. I therefore recommend that Wm. Morris be made Captain of Co. F, on account of the valuable services he has rendered here and elsewhere. GENERAL T—."

A week later, when Gen. T— again joined Gen. Grant's army, Lieut. Wiley lost no time in seeking an interview with the chief commander. In strong terms, he reported the parole and the insubordinate conduct of Private Wm. Morris of Co. F, and told that Gen. T— did not even reprove the disobedience of the parole order, but sanctioned it.

Then he added, for his own direct benefit:

"Of course, it is understood that Capt. Warner is to be promoted; and I think that justice demands that I should be appointed to his place. Can I know something definite about it?"

While he was yet talking, a messenger from Gen. T— brought a letter, and also a note, which proved to be a leaf from Gen. T—'s memorandum book. Gen. Grant looked it over in silence, then said:

"Lieut. Wiley, you and Gen. T— don't seem to place the same estimate upon Private Morris' worth. When Capt. Warner is promoted, you will know about his successor."

Will Morris received orders to appear at Gen. Grant's head-quarters at 2 P. M. that same day. He reported in due time and was met with a stern, business-like glance, that seemed to read his very thoughts.

"Wm. Morris, order No. 5 to Gen. T—'s army as they left camp was: 'No paroling, unless imperative, until further orders.' Did you understand that order?"

"I did, sir," replied Will.

"Did you parole a man, after taking him prisoner, at No. 10, on the morning of Nov. 23d?" Very deliberately the General spoke, scanning the face before him.

"I did, sir," said Will, unfaltering still, though he knew not what the sentence might be.

"Give your reasons for disobeying orders, sir."

"Well, General Grant, I will be as brief as possible but must ask a little of your time. I was born in Virginia and lived there until I was eight years old. My father had two sons when he married my mother; we were raised together until we left Virginia. I loved my half-brothers as well as I loved any one. Hiram, the oldest son, stayed in Virginia, where he married the daughter of a wealthy planter, and afterward moved to Tennessee. We settled in Iowa where we have lived ever since. I always wrote to my absent brother until just before the war. My father is, and has never ceased to be, a Southern man in his opinions; he has always been a good, kind father to me, until now. He loves his son Hiram. My mother, who is a strong Unionist, loves the children she raised, though she grieves that they are in the wrong in this matter. My only sister loves her half-brother. I have dear friends who espouse each side of this great and bloody quarrel.

'I had known through my home-folks, some time ago, that my brother Hiram was in the Confederate ranks; I prayed, as devoutly as I can pray, that I should be spared the knowledge that my brother was in the ranks in front of me! That night, on duty at No. 10, I had my gun pointed at him and was just on the verge of firing, when Providence spared me. I took the risk—there was two of them—and made him my prisoner not knowing who he was. But when I found it was my brother; that his father was my father; that his

sister was my sister, and she would weep bitter tears did she know I'd taken her brother, whom she loves so dearly, prisoner, my heart failed me! I offered to parole him and let him go; he acceded to my terms. He surrendered his allegiance to the so-called Confederacy before the stronger ties.

"I broke your order, never thinking what the cost would be. I am willing to take my punishment; I know it will cost me less than to have sent my brother to prison! Sir, lay all the blame on me and punish me as seems to you just."

Gen. Grant had not looked into Will's eyes after the first few sentences, and now he sat, gazing into space, for nearly a minute. Then, taking his pen, he wrote a while in silence, called an orderly and sent a letter to be delivered at once. Then turning to Will he said:

"My friend, had the North and South been made up of such men as you, there would be no war to-day; you have done a noble deed. I shall never forget you. Go back to your camp. Good-bye."

Will walked back slowly, with a bird in his heart and a frog in his throat.

Harry came out to meet him with a letter directed to "Captain Wm. Morris of Co. F, Seventh Iowa," and stamped at U. S. Grant's head-quarters.

'Twas the commission, then, that Gen. Grant had filled before he spoke to Will, when he finished his story!

Four of the boys held him up as high as they could while the rest of Co. F gave three rousing cheers for Capt. Morris!

Lieut. Wiley was so busy in his tent that he didn't get out in time to swell the loud shout for Capt. Morris. If only the wind had wafted the sound northward with enough force for Grace and Aunt Polly to have heard it!

CHAPTER IX

AT ELM COTTAGE

"It's almost Christmas again and the boys still away," said Floy one evening, as they sat in their accustomed nooks.

"But, thank God, they still live!" said Aunt Polly devoutly. "Think of John Minton's young wife, whose husband will never come back; killed in the battle of Shiloh, and she has to make a livin' for two little babies. Think of Henry Wilder and Roy Allen, three out of those twenty-seven that enlisted from here. Oh, when will the war close! What will come of it?"

After a moment, to hush her own questionings Grace said, determined to see the bright side:

"What shall we send Will for Christmas this time?" We can't send a general box as before; wasn't that a real pleasure though, it all went off so nicely! Some little Christmas he must have, even if we can't have any."

"What would he think, if we would send him one of mother's molasses cakes? That's all we have now; and they're quite good, with real coffee," laughed Floy; "I wonder if soldiers have to use rye coffee, too?"

"No, the boys get rale coffee, anyway, but lots of their families have to use rye, and many don't get even

molasses cakes," said Aunt Polly, "but Will must have a good cake."

"Perhaps—I feel quite sure, indeed," said Grace, "that mother will want to send something to Clay and Harry, so we can send together."

A step sounded on the frozen gravel-walk; a light, quick rap at the door. Floy opened it, and a bright-faced young lady entered, her cheeks aglow with unusual excitement.

"Lois Miller! What brought you here alone?" exclaimed Floy.

"A good stout pair of number 4's," rejoined Lois, loosening her wraps and taking the rocker which Grace placed for her near the stove. "It's a beautiful moonlight night, and I'm not a speck afraid of any one running off with me. Where's Gwen? Sound asleep as can be, I suppose?"

"Of course you're not afraid of your respected teacher," said Grace. "Yes; the darling is sleepin' down wif her dolly. Do you bring any news from the boys?" she anxiously asked, scanning Lois' face, for news was dreaded as well as welcomed.

"No; nothing late," replied she, "I just came to see you and have a talk."

"And we're powerful glad to have you," said Aunt Polly. "We get mightily lonesome sometimes, waitin' and waitin' for the war to close, and listenin' for tidings of our boys." This she said sadly, for Aunt Polly felt "blue" to-night, blue as the sock upon which she was knitting.

A kind, sympathetic look took the place of the usually bright one; for Lois, too, was waiting continually

for tidings from the absent ones, though she had no brother or father in the army.

"No; our latest news was that of Will's promotion —of course, you have the particulars from him. I'm so glad for you too!"

"Thank you, dear," said Grace, "but you have heard, then, also, the circumstances which led directly to it—"

"Yes; just think of the poor boy nearly shooting his brother!" said Aunt Polly; "it must have staggered him when he found out who the man was he came so near firing at. Poor boy! Hi used to be an uncommon good boy; I shouldn't 'a' thought this of him."

"I'm glad he was made to go home, though, and stay there," said Floy; "now Will will know he isn't shooting at his brother in battle."

"It was a trying scene, of course, but it showed Will's true nobility, as well as bravery," said Lois. "Say, I guess I'll go to the hospital. Do you think I'd do?" turning to Grace.

"The hospital!" repeated Floy; "Lois Miller, what in the world would you do there?"

"Of course you'd do, dear," said Grace, clasping her hand warmly and kissing away the tear that glistened on her cheek. "And your bright sunny face would bless and cheer many a poor suffering soldier; but 'tis your last year in school, Lois, and you wanted to graduate."

"Yes, but I also wanted to go to the hospital long ago; but couldn't quite get the consent of my selfish old heart, and mother yet opposes it, but father says he'd be proud to have me go since he has no son to fight for the Stars and Stripes;" and Lois smiled fondly

at the remembrance of her father's proud look, when she actually decided to sacrifice her ambition to rank well at school, to the higher one of ranking well among the noble women who sacrificed home and all for the sake of the Union and humanity.

"You're a good girl, Lois," said Aunt Polly, busily picking up the stitches which she had dropped on hearing the news, "and have got lots of common sense along of a mighty good heart, and that's a sight better 'n fine edication in jist book-larnin'. You're purty young to leave home, though; and mebbe you haven't got the narve for a hospital nuss."

"Oh, I'm quite a sedate young lady now, Aunt Polly; I was eighteen last week, and I'm not at all nervous; indeed, I don't know that I have any nerves, from any trouble they give me," said Lois laughingly. "You are all such a comfort; I knew you would be, though, and so ran up to talk it over. I think I can get ready to enter upon duty on the first of the New Year. I want to go at once and have it over."

"Shall you go to St. Louis?" asked Grace. "Do go there, dear; for you might be the blessed helper of some of our own boys."

"Yes, I want to go there, of course, since our Iowa troops are in the West," she said, coloring slightly, "and then 'twill be nearer home, you know. There's another thing that troubles me, and that is, I'm afraid father and mother will actually suffer during the winter, for everybody seems so hard up. But I don't see any way to earn bread if I stay here."

"God is everywhere, Lois; and your old father and mother will be cared for as the raven, before He'd

allow them to suffer while you are on your errand of mercy," said Grace, comfortingly. Lois gave her a grateful look and soon left, Floy accompanying her half way.

Two weeks later, a sprightly little figure, in a neat brown dress, took the train for St. Louis amid the cheers and kerchief-wavings of a host of friends and patriots.

The W. S. A. S. turned out in full in honor of one of its members going in person to the hospital, as nurse. The High School adjourned to see her off; and if Prof. Baker held her hand a little longer than was strictly necessary, it must be remembered that 'twas exciting times, and "everything's fair in love and war." Aunt Polly Morris, president of the W. S. A. S. and originator of the idea of going in a body to see Lois off, had such a severe cold that she couldn't go to the depot. But she waved a flag from the cottage door. Lois saw it and answered, to Aunt Polly's satisfaction.

A Christmas box had been sent to Capt. Will, Clay, and Harry with a nice dinner, though less expensive than the previous one, and a picture of Gwen standing up holding a flag-staff while the Stars and Stripes floated o'er her. An inspiration it proved to Will on every battle-field afterward. On the back was written, in Grace's well-known and beloved hand-writing:

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of everywhere into here.
Where did you get your eyes of blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

"Where did you get your coral ear?
God spoke and it came out to hear.
Whence came your hands and feet, such tiny things?

Out of the same chest as angel-wings.
"But how did these things come to be you?
God thought of me and so I grew.
But why did you come to us, my dear?
God thought of you, and so I'm here."

The cold that prevented Aunt Polly from going to the station, prevented her from going anywhere; and continued to grow worse until, one night, the girls came home from school and found her with high fever and a severe hacking cough.

They were awfully worried, for Aunt Polly had always been hale and hearty. She would never do anything for a cold; "Oh I'll soon wear it out," she would say; but this one seemed determined to wear her out instead. Grace sent Floy off for Doctor Osborne, although Aunt Polly declared "'twas no use, for she would just take a strong ginger-stew at night and sweat the cold off." But Doctor Osborne's serious countenance, after examining her lungs, told Grace that it was more than just a bad cold, and made Floy ask:

"Is she much sick, Doctor Osborne?"

"Yes, pretty sick," he answered, then added gently, as he saw the frightened little one, "we'll have her out of that in a few days. Polly's grit never failed her yet and she'll pull through all right."

After a romp with Baby Gwen, during which she loaded herself down with candy from "Danpa's potet," as she always did, he took Grace aside and gave directions for medicine and good nursing.

"Polly's lungs are in a bad fix, Grace," he said, "and she's got high fever; she must have very careful treatment to pull through."

"Oh, father, she must get well!" cried Grace. "What

would Will say if anything should happen to mother? We must make her well! Bless her old heart, she'd work her finger-nails off for us. Hadn't we better put a bed up in the sitting-room, make a fire in the heater, and move her out there this evening?"

"Yes; that's a good idea; oh, you and Floy will make capital nurses," said the kind physician, as Floy came into the kitchen to know the danger, if there was any. The suspense she couldn't bear.

"Doctor Osborne, you wouldn't deceive me, would you? tell me the truth about my mother; I'll not cry, nor worry, but work to make her well."

"Brave little girl, you're made of the right metal. Your mother is very sick, but you and Grace can help me get her up again."

"Oh, we'll do it, Floy, let us move my bed into the sitting-room, and fix it comfortably for mother. Father, as you go down town ask Mike to come early in the morning and chop us some wood. Run, play with Kitty, Gwen; see her under the stove?"

"Say, father," called she, just remembering another trouble, "Whatever can I do about my school? I can't leave mother."

"I was just thinking of it," said he, knitting his brow; "con-slam it! why ain't I able to take care of you? Let the old school go; it's too hard, the way you women have roughed it out; shoveling your own snow and stinting along to make all ends meet. Resign, of course. Will wants you to, and times must be better soon."

"Will insists upon my resigning, but he won't draw any pay until March, and I don't see how I can man-

age things, father," said Grace with a puzzled look; "You can't assume too much of a burden, when you don't get half your pay and no telling whether you ever will or not, when the people are so hard up. No, I must get a substitute for a short time, and return again as soon as I can be spared."

Tears came into Floy's eyes in spite of her efforts to choke them back—hot despairing tears; her life had all been so sheltered and happy before, but she was waking to its grievous phases now—hard cold facts for a girl of fifteen to learn.

"If you were only teaching in the primary, I could take your place, Grace. I want you to stay here? you'd take so much better care of mother than I could," she said, the choking sensation coming to her throat again. "I'll tell you what we can do! To-morrow is Friday, you go to school—I'll stay and take care of mother and Gwen—and may be you can get Miss Monsoe, of the intermediate, to take your place, then I can take her place like a top."

"You're such a mite of a thing," laughed the doctor "that those ten and twelve-year-olds would throw you out of the window."

"I'd come right in and thrash them," said Floy promptly.

"Now, don't you think that might do?" thoughtfully asked Grace, "I think perhaps that would work. Floy is young, of course, but she's plucky, and the children all like her."

"Well, she's a fine little woman, anyhow," said the doctor, bowing to her, as she went banging the ends of the bed-slats to knock them loose.

"I'll bring Mother Osborne in the morning to stay here, and I'll drive you down to school."

The sick woman was soon comfortably fixed in the sitting-room, but the fever grew higher, and morning found Aunt Polly unconscious to all that was going on about her, calling piteously in her delirium for Will, and staring hard and cold at even Baby Gwen, who wanted to "tiss damma mornin'."

Mrs. Osborne, with her sweet motherly face wearing an anxious expression, came early, with the doctor, who shook his head ominously at the decided change for the worse.

"Floy, you and Grace will both be needed here," he said as he prepared some medicine. "A new substitute must be found; I'll take Grace down soon and see about getting some one."

Two weeks passed. Aunt Polly lay dangerously ill. All that human skill could do was done. Grace and Floy took turns every night in watching, with kind neighbors, for they would trust no one to do the smallest things—regulating the heat, ventilating the room, and giving the medicine on time. They found out the warm hearts that were hidden by the busy turmoil of life; they found the "angel side" of neighbors they had known only in part before. For everybody wanted to help, and did help them. A huge pile of wood was cut for them one day by Sam Cline, whom everybody laughed at for not going to the war after talking so loudly about it, and who was constitutionally lazy.

They were somewhat surprised, one evening, when Floy and Grace were alone, to answer a knock at the door and find there Harvey Morris.

"You're surprised to see me, of course; but a man must be human. How is mother? Is she as bad as reports say?"

"Goody, goody, Harvey! I wondered why you didn't come; it did look so hard," and Floy burst out crying.

Tears, real manly tears, came to Harvey's eyes, as he kissed her hair fondly, saying:

"'Twould be a tougher thing than I could do, to go by, and leave her sick, when many a night she has watched by me, as faithfully as if I had been her own son."

He left when Widow Edwards came in to "sit up," but slipped five dollars into Floy's hand, saying: "You need more, I know, but 'tis all I have now. Let me know if I can do anything."

Grace saw it and smiled her approval; while she hated to take it, she was glad too, for they did "need money" so much.

The crisis came at last, and the old doctor, who watched by the bedside himself, noticed the less laborious breathing and felt the more even pulse, and his face beamed with gladness, as he said:

"She will live! Thank God, she will live!"

'Twas echoed by each heart. Floy laid her head in Grace's lap, laughing and crying, and went to sleep. The burden had been lifted.

'Twas a trying time for Aaron Morris; thrice he had been on the verge of going over to the cottage, and had even gone half-way once but turned back, saying: "No, I'll not make a fool of myself. Everybody would say I'm ashamed of my principles and wanted

to take back my actions, I'm not ashamed and won't give in an inch. I hope Polly will get well, though."

The next morning, he had given Floy a silver dollar when she came down.

Aunt Polly mended very slowly; Grace went back to school-work again, but Floy remained housekeeper until April. Will's extra pay relieved their want then and the hard times were tided over.

CHAPTER X

HARRY HOLDS THE FLAG

The historian loves to tell of deeds of valor and courage; but in a war like the late rebellion, to picture all the heroism, to tell in fitting words the achievements of all the brave men, would take a lifetime; and one could only read the preface—only hear the mellow tones of the bell while the great war-train rumbled and roared, rocking to and fro, and sweeping its millions to their last resting-place.

Other wars have been waged for years, and, at the close, the victims could be counted by the hundreds, even by the scores; have been waged for years and but two or three have made a name worth mentioning.

Alexander was the one great warrior of his day; none dared to face the "mighty Cæsar;" and all Europe trembled at the very name of Napoleon, until after the battle of Waterloo; then England spoke of Arthur Wellesley as "Our Soldier."

Not so in the late rebellion. The North and the South each hurled its mighty strength against the other, like a fierce hurricane beating against the sides of a huge mountain, and it was not until tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands were killed, that the fierce wave of rebellion was hurled back and the Union stood without a quiver.

When this war closed, there were hundreds of Na-

poleons and Alexanders, and many times had the battle of Waterloo been fought over again. Though hundreds have been mentioned, thousands have been known only to the commands who saw their noble acts.

This was only a skirmish, as historians say, but in it many valiant soldiers fell, as in Thermopylæ, and a smooth-faced, blue eyed-boy, with a soul as great as that of the bravest general of them all, won laurels that might have honored a far-famed hero.

'Twas the morning of May 17th, 1863—the day after Grant had driven Pemberton from Champion Hill, and was aiming to cut him off and destroy his army or take it prisoner.

General T— was ordered to hurry his division round to a certain point east of where he was then stationed, without molesting the enemy. In so doing, he had to take a circuitous route of three or four miles through a forest; a strong wind blew from the east, against which they traveled fast; for they were expecting an engagement, and buoyed up by the enthusiasm of yesterday's victory, were anxious to open fire once more.

While *en route,* Harry was mounted and sent back to carry a message to Capt. Garner, who commanded Company G, of the 18th Iowa, and who had special care of the supply-wagons at this time. Harry galloped swiftly down the road and soon passed the rear of the army as they hurried on. The roads were very muddy and the supplies were being left behind.

Harry had handed Capt. Garner the message to bring his supplies forward with the utmost speed and

push them far to the front if the battle were renewed that day. The note was read and the captain gave orders to quicken the speed; but scarcely had the words been spoken when a company of some five hundred Confederate cavalry-men dashed out of the forest in front of them.

What to do was realized in a moment by the brave, resolute Captain Garner, who rode down the line, pale but with fiery eyes, and said to his men:

"Boys, we must save this ammunition at any cost. We will have help soon, but now we must hold them off alone."

Those were his last words, for just then a volley of rifle balls came crashing through the branches, and several of Co. G's soldiers were killed; among them, the brave Captain Garner fell from his horse dead. The lieutenant was wounded so severely that he could not take command. Several of the horses hitched to the wagons were killed or wounded, and all was soon confusion and fright; wagons were upset and all the drivers jumped from their places to the shelter of carts and trees. What to do came to Harry's head in a moment; the captain was dead, the lieutenant so badly wounded that he could do nothing; and Harry's very face showed the soul that animated his boyish form. His lips and eye denoted an unyielding spirit. His clear voice rang out:

"Now, boys, let us show our metal; for Capt. Garner's last words were: 'We must hold them off at any cost.'"

In the next volley, Harry's horse was shot from under him and the flag was broken from its staff. In-

stantly the boy grabbed it and set it in front of the head-wagon with, "There we'll keep it, or we'll die!"

His words acted like magic; soon every man was rallied, and from behind wagons, trees and dead horses they returned the fire with such vigor that the Confederates were driven from the center of the road.

Still they continued to pour an almost continuous fire into the handful of scattered soldiers.

The boys expected now, at every minute, to see the Confederates attacked from the other side; for surely, the main army would hear the firing and come to the rescue.

Volley after volley was poured into them; nearly every horse in the train was killed or wounded, and only the wagons and trees saved the boys. They kept concealed as much as possible, and when the Confederates closed, Harry would say: "Fire!" and every man of them would obey his orders as if it were Gen. Grant himself that spoke. Almost one-fifth of their number was killed in the first fire and charge; still the boys in blue knew they were holding their own with the "gray-coats," if these did outnumber them five to one.

However reluctantly a man may go into battle, when once there all fear vanishes. A forgetful anger takes possession of the whole man; and with fire in his eye, a determination written on every feature, he thinks only to avenge the death of his comrades. When their number becomes few, he feels that a double duty is now upon him, and for the double duty well performed comes the just demand for twice-double reward. This little band of heroes had in their charge all the sup-

plies for one grand division of Grant's great army.

"We can hold them at bay, boys, and we'll do it at any cost—help will come soon, surely," said Harry to the little group behind one of the wagons; "but we must get in better position."

It was suggested to run four of the wagons up even and let them form a breastwork, and it proved an excellent plan.

They were now in good position, and Harry, though a comparative stranger, was regarded as the fit commander of the miniature army. Twice the flag-staff was broken, but the flag was replaced in position; the third time the staff was too short, and Harry put it on a gun barrel and bayonet and stood it up over them.

Charge after charge the Confederate cavalry made upon them, and, once or twice, they came almost near enough to reach the handful of brave men defending the supplies. But each time they fell back when the shots were thickest, and before they were out of gunshot they had received every bullet in the Minie rifles.

Almost one hour (it seemed a day) had passed when the welcome sound of firing on the other side was heard, and, after one volley, the Stars and Stripes came sailing into view, like a bird of paradise. Gen. T—'s "old yaller" was leading the van.

In five minutes all firing had ceased, and four hundred of the five hundred who made the attack were prisoners of war; the other hundred had been "paroled" to never bear arms against the Union.

Out of over one hundred Union soldiers and drivers, only sixty-three remained.

"Is Capt. Garner shot?" was Gen. T—'s first question.

Not a word was spoken, but one of the soldiers pointed to where he lay, with the blood and brains oozing from where that cruel bullet had buried itself. All turned their faces from the ghastly sight, but some one gave an audible groan, and turning, Harry saw "Darkey Pete," sobbing as if his heart would break.

"Oh, sah, I can't help it, sah, fur dat am just de way my pooh Jo did look, shot right through in de head, an' he am all de 'lashun I hab in dis worle. Oh! oh! Poor Jo!"

"Well, boys, you've done bravely. You've fought like men!" said Gen. T—, as soon as he could speak without giving way to his emotion. At the words, Harry's mind reverted to the little white chapel in Mapleton; he heard again Rev. Miller's voice, "Quit yourselves like men!" and tears sprang into his eyes which had flashed fire so recently—but Gen. T— was still praising them.

"You deserve more credit than the knights of King Arthur's round table."

"Hit was all along on thet chile, sah," said Darky Pete. "Hit's all along on that chile," pointing to Harry, who blushed under Gen. T—'s approving look. "But we didn't hab no time to git round a table, an' bofe my teams dead wid de harness rite on 'em."

The wounded were cared for, but a battle was being fought now, for the strong wind brought the roar of cannon and the smell of smoke. So the dead soldiers of both blue and gray were left with the horses in the road.

But Gen. T— said, as the drivers started over the dead bodies of the Confederates:

"Be careful, boys, don't trample or disfigure any of them. They have all dear friends, and they themselves were good citizens once; and all that remains of them is now here."

"Let that flag be just as it is," said Gen. T—. "I want Co. F. of 7th Iowa, to see it and know who it was that helped to keep it there. They'll be prouder than ever of their boy-soldier then."

"Helped to keep it there!" exclaimed one of the company; "he placed it there himself and told us we must keep it there at any cost."

"If he hadn't come up just as he did, the whole line of supplies would have been taken, and we also, for it did look like suicide to shoot back and have them continue to fire into our little band. But he was so young and so fearless that I 'spose we would have died right there if he had told us to do so."

Soon they were upon the scene of battle, and Harry had forgotten his exploits of the morning; but when the battle was won, and all were making arrangements for camping on the field that night, the wagon with the tattered flag was driven up before the tents of Co. F, and Gen. T— took time to ride around and explain to the men how and where he had found "their boy" in the morning.

The company was delighted to hear all about the skirmish. Capt. Will was proud of Harry and said so; Clay was jubilant, but only smiled his enthusiasm.

"Be jobbers, an' I wish I had ben there to hev encouraged the boy," said Pat.

"Yes," rejoined John Edwards; "you would have put the whole mob to flight, if you hadn't got shot in the ear."

"Yea make a heap of fun about my being shot in the are, but if yea had a part of the aches I hev from it ivery few days, you wouldn't call it such a joke. An I'll belave, till my dying day, that ivery bone in that are was broken."

Harry was surprised more than ever when Gen. Grant himself came around next morning, looked at the flag and praised Harry for his "true bravery."

"Here," said Gen. Grant, "you may claim it for your pains." So saying he handed the relic to the boy, who felt that these words of praise and looks of pride from Gen. Grant repaid him for all the weary marches since leaving home.

"Faith an be jobbers!" cried out Pat, turning from the receding General, and eying critically the torn flag, which Harry was still holding just as General Grant had given it to him. He had decided, on the spot, to send it to his mother without unrolling it. "An he's as stingy an ould craythur as I ever sot my eyes on. Why couldn't he hev give ye a houl one, to be sure; that thing is just riddled intirely. An they've got a plenty of houl ones—it's a snakin' trick, ses I."

A laugh was the only reply of his comrades, and Harry held it tight, as if he feared it might stir or get away.

Two weeks later the W. S. A. S. was in session in Mapleton. Gen. Grant's army was around Vicksburg; the whole North was standing on tiptoe, listening to catch every whisper of news from the army of the West, which had known nothing but "On to victory."

A committee is now at the depot and have telegraphed for news, but no reply has come back. A whistle down the river announces that, in a few minutes, the Eastern mail will be in. The red mounted to each woman's anxious face, as she thought of the letter she hoped to get from her dear one far away, whilst the smoke rolled in great clouds from the engine as it came round the curve.

Doctor Osborne had been walking up and down the platform quite sedately; but when the train came nearer and nearer, he walked faster and faster. One of the group of men, standing by, remarked that the doctor reminded him of a huge lion as he stalked from one end of his cage to the other, restless and as if wishing to be back in his native forest once more.

The train has not fully stopped before the mail sack is thrown off, and it has not touched the platform ere it is caught and started off to the postoffice. Then come the sacks of newspapers, and all eyes scan them eagerly, as if they could read some of the wished-for news through the leather-bound canvas.

"Oh, here's more mail; I came near carrying it by," said the mail agent, and this time he held up a flag without the staff. He did not throw it, but carefully handed it down to Doctor Osborne with:

"I guess, by the looks of it, this has a history."

The old doctor read in big letters, "Mrs. Dr. Osborne." The fine writing he couldn't make out without his spectacles; he fumbled nervously in his pocket for them; but Guy Harrington ended the suspense by reading aloud:

"Please let mother unroll this; it is just as Gen. Grant rolled it up and handed it to me. HARRY."

If that crowd had been near Vicksburg the roar of the cannon and the whistle of the bugle would have been drowned by the air-splitting yells that were echoed from the bluffs across the river. Sam Cline gave the signal, and, from the dignified old doctor himself down to Mike McGuire, there came out three long, loud cheers for Harry.

The doctor hurried off toward the hall to find Mrs. Osborne, for he was anxious to see the old flag unfurled; and thereto he was followed by as large a crowd of men and boys as is usually found in the wake of the elephant on show-days.

"Here, Elizabeth," he called, as he reached the top stair, "'tis from Harry; he sent it to you and wanted you to open it. Gen. Grant gave it to him, rolled up just as it is now." As the doctor ended, with a deep breath, he was surrounded by the W. S. A. S., who were unceremoniously adjourned at his coming.

Mrs. Osborne unrolled the flag, amid various comments and ejaculations from the ladies and girls about her. Tears filled her eyes as the tattered flag told its story of a hard-earned victory her blue-eyed boy had evidently helped to win.

Aunt Polly had surveyed the torn banner closely and was now ready to make a prediction, and she uttered it slowly and deliberately.

"There are just thirty-five holes in that flag, and that's just the same number as the states belonging to this Union. Now I calkerlate this as a sign that the Union will be saved and the old flag preserved, but there'll be a hole in every state in the Union."

The hall was soon crowded and the Rev. Miller was

called upon for a speech. The flag had created enough enthusiasm in his heart to put eloquence and words of praise in his mouth; he gave vent to his feelings in strong terse terms, but he forgot to mention the other brave boys and men who had enlisted from Mapleton. 'Twas an oversight on the part of the good old minister, but 'twas one that touched tender chords in the hearts of those who had dear ones of their own facing danger, as well as Harry, so when he took his seat no applause followed.

"I shall never give Miller another cent!" said Mrs. Edwards to Mrs. Harrington, as they walked down the street together after adjournment. "I don't see any use in praising one boy up so high, and not saying a word for others riskin' just as much as he. Harry Osborne wus allus praised up at school and every place else. Jest cause he's got a kinder nice way of making folks like him. Allus got more credit than he desarved, I'll warrant. John never would 'low folks to brag on him and I'm glad on it. 'Taint no use in praisin' folks up and makin' 'em proud and stuck up."

"There come the school-boys, and Guy is reading a letter; I wonder if it isn't a letter from Harry?" said Mrs. Harrington.

"I'll warrant he is braggin' about his big things in the army, whatever they air," and Mrs. Edwards turned her head away as they were now passing the Osborne house, and she thought she almost hated the whole "Osborne set."

"Who is your letter from, Guy?" was Mrs. Harrington's inquiry as they neared the group of boys.

"From Harry. A good one, too, I tell you!" said Guy; "Harry is a splendid fellow."

"I 'spose he's a mighty big fellow, to take his word for it," was Mrs. Edwards' quick remark, and she couldn't refrain from giving Guy a scornful look, for it was too much to hear him commence another eulogy upon Harry's virtues.

"What does he say, Guy? Does he say anything about the other boys?" asked Mrs. Harrington.

Mrs. Edwards was starting on as Guy said:

"Yes; he mentions nearly all of them, but says a great deal about 'noble John Edwards,' as he calls John."

"Huh! I didn't 'spose he could call anybody noble but hisself," said Mrs. Edwards, her tone softening a little as she stepped back.

"Is that all he says about John?"

"O no! I'll read you what he says of him: 'I can't tell you of each one separately as I should like and as I know would suit you; for Gen. T— told Will and John Edwards that we would change our position in two hours. John is our lieutenant now, you know—"

"What! you don't say so!" exclaimed Mrs. Edwards; "I knowed my John would hold his own alongside the best of 'em."

"Yes; John's lieutenant," said Guy. "Here's how it came about," and he read on, Mrs. Edwards listening with a smiling face.

"'We got tired of Wiley, and he of us; so after I was with those Iowa fellows that held the supplies, Gen. T— offered to make Clay lieutenant for the part I

took. I don't know what Gen. T— meant, but he said: 'Tip, you shall have a reminder for that work, but you're too young to take Lieut. Wiley's place, so I guess we'll put Clay in (he had sent for Clay and I to come to head-quarters). Clay would not take the place; for both of us thought John Edwards deserved it; so Gen. T— said, if we wanted Edwards, then he would recommend him. He did; and John is Lieutenant Edwards now. I tell you John is as brave as brave can be; so quiet about it too. That's the only trouble with him, he's too quiet; people don't know him well enough to tell his worth. If there is a true, whole-souled, brave soldier in the army, John Edwards is one. We just love him. He and I had a long talk, last night, about home. He feels just right about his mother and sister. He will get extra pay now, and he'll save it to send home to the folks, for he's like his old mother in that particular: he will share his last cent. I remember she used to give me a quarter of a pie every evening I went that way from school. How I'd like to have some of the pie now that she used to give me when I was six and seven. Clay got to calling John 'gold-filled' and now we call him Lieut. Gold-filled Edwards. Pat makes us lots of fun.'

"That's all about John there, but he speaks of him with the rest in two or three places," and Guy stepped across the street to help "Pat McGuire Jr." out of a mud-puddle he got into as they came from the hall.

Mrs. Edwards declared she had forgotten something at the store, and Mrs. Harrington went on with Kate McGuire, but she noticed that Mrs. Edwards never got past the Osborne home.

Rev. Miller had stopped at Doctor Osborne's too, and Mrs. Edwards paid him her share for the next quarter, and a dollar more, saying:

"The extra dollar is for good measure, because I think anybody that can talk as nice as you did about a deservin' boy, and 'lows his only daughter to go as a nurse to the hospital, desarves a little extra pay."

Two hours were spent in talking over the war and the boys. Dr. and Mrs. Osborne learned for the first time how Harry, when he first started for school, used to go around to Edwards' every chance he could get for pie, and how the good old soul had always loved Harry since he was a little child, almost like one of her own.

The old tattered flag, by Mrs. Edwards' suggestion, was hung over Harry's picture in the parlor.

Shortly afterward, there came to the Union camp a box of knickknacks and several pies, directed to "Lieut. Gold-filled Edwards" and Harry "True-worth Osborne, from "Pie-baker," Mapleton, Iowa.

CHAPTER XI

BABY GWEN FINDS THE WAY TO THE OLD MAN'S HEART

"Now, Gwen, you run into the sitting-room and stay with grandma. I am going over to grandpa's. Get your dolly—where's Gwen's dolly?"

"No! *no!* me do to my danpa wid my Foy," and Baby Gwen clung to Floy's dress still saying, "me want to do to my danpa's wid my Foy."

Aunt Polly was reading war-news; Grace had gone to Judge Burton's to give Emma a music-lesson, for Emma had a piano and gave Grace extra pay to come to her house, since Grace had but an organ at Elm Cottage.

"Now, mamma, if you'll look after Gwen, I'm going," said Floy, as she tied on her big sun-down and started.

Aunt Polly rarely took time to read, but now she was thoroughly interested, and, though she made some answer to Floy, she did not know what she said; and only remembered, two hours later, that she had heard Gwen say, "Dood-by, my danma, I do to my danpa wif my Foy."

Floy sauntered across the meadow, enjoying the balmy June air and sky, her thoughts a medley, which caused various expressions to play on her mobile face. Now she plucked a wild rose; now she looked long at a neat gold medal she wore on her necklace, saying to herself, "Wear it till I come, wear it till I come."

Then she caroled a few words, blithesome as a lark just set free, but scarcely would the song die on her lips before a sober, even troubled, look would o'ercast the sunny one.

"Poor girl!" said Rev. Miller to himself, as he passed her at her father's gate, "I can't see how she always seems so bright and happy; 'tis a wonder her trouble does not crowd every mite of sunshine out of her young heart."

Had he seen her a few minutes later, he would have thought her young life clouded indeed, for she leaned against the old gate-post and had a good cry, notwithstanding her vows to be bright and cheery.

"It's just too bad!" she half sobbed. "Here I feel just like an orphan and my father and mother both living, not more than half a mile apart! When I'm here it seems as if my mother must be dead, and when I'm at Elm Cottage I feel as if I had no father. One brother, a captain in the Union army, another a paroled rebel, a third at home with scarcely a friend on account of his opinions about the war! But I must do my chores, and stop my very thoughts, or I shall go wild!"

Letting the gate stand ajar, she bounded up the walk as if she wanted to run away from her bitter thoughts, through the kitchen into the pantry, and was soon kneading bread. She had not looked back and had hardly cast a second glance round the room; but she soon noticed that her father was not sitting in the large arm-chair, just the counterpart of the one she had left her mother sitting in.

Many times, this summer, Gwen had started to follow Floy across the meadow; but Grace had always

caught her before she had gone far and brought her back, for she wasn't sure that the disinherited son's baby would have a welcome at his father's home.

Aunt Polly had often said:

"No, indeed, since Will has been turned out, bekase he's a Union soldier—his little 'Union baby' shan't set her dainty little foot on the place."

But Aunt Polly was too much absorbed now, in the long lists of "Dead," "Wounded" and "Taken prisoner," to notice anything else; and before Floy had been in the pantry ten minutes, "Baby Gwen" had climbed up the steps and was on her grandfather's porch, for the first time. To the baby's extreme delight, Tabby, with three cunning kittens, lay on the door-mat. "Dat ditty!" she cried in baby glee. "Dat my ditty!" and soon she had forgotten everything but the treasures, and was trying to get all of them in her lap at once.

Old man Morris came around the corner of the house and found her there. He stopped short, and stood fully two minutes watching the new-comer on his porch.

The old man had kept his ground; he had never wavered but once. When Aunt Polly was so dangerously sick last winter, he had been tempted, a few times, to go up to Elm Cottage; but as soon as she was well again he had called himself "an old simpleton" that he had ever allowed such a thought to enter his head. He had known of the hard winter they had just pulled through, but had never given a thing except to Floy. The snubbing received from his former friends and kind neighbors hurt him, at first; but now he prided himself on "not caring for what they thought

or said." He, in turn, nursed an enmity against anyone who "sided with the North." He had always been a stern-featured man, but now a harder, more determined look had settled about his eyes and forehead. His hair was now quite gray, and resembled bristles more than hair, for it stood straight up, as if it, too, disdained to bend.

But, amid the old memories of other babies, who had played on that porch, the big blue eyes were turned toward him; and with all his firmness, he could not withstand the sweet baby glance and the "Are oo my danpa? Are oo my dear danpa?" Grace had always shown him to her, as he passed to and from the village, and had taught her to call him her "dear danpa" just as she did Grandpa Osborne.

"No, baby, I'm your old rebel grandpa!" he said, for he thought Floy must have brought her there to trap him. Then he remembered seeing Floy bound up the walk and into the house alone. The next minute he had stooped down and taken her in his arms, for the first time in her life.

She clung to one kitty until he had taken her up in his arms, when she let it fall on the floor, causing it to cry with pain.

"I doppen ditten! I doppen ditten! Poor ditty, poor ditty!" and Gwen squirmed in his arms until he let her down to get the kitten once more.

Then holding it tight in both chubby arms she cried, "I hud my ditty! My mamma hud datten baby!" and she pointed to her little rosy cheek.

It was too much for a man who had raised children and loved them, as he had, to resist the temptation of

kissing the dimpled cheek, and, with a hasty glance about him to see that no one was watching, he held her close to his face and kissed her. That kiss was the key that unlocked the old man's heart and brought great tears to his eyes. Again and again, he kissed her and she was perfectly willing so long as he allowed her to keep the kittens.

Floy had finished her work, and not seeing anything of her father. she had gone out through a side door and down into the garden where he spent much of his time. Not finding him there she went up the long rows of grape vines, calling him, but no answer came. Then, thinking he had gone to Harvey's, she found her way across the field toward Elm Cottage.

The old man took a seat on the porch and watched the child playing. He fancied he could see the actions of Will in the baby's every movement. More than once, he brushed a tear from his cheek with his rough hand.

"Why should they treat me thus? Why should I live so close to my grand-child and never have had her on my knee before this? Why should my child, my only daughter, live in another house than my own, and not see me for two or three days at a time? It is a hard, hard world!" he said, half aloud, as he watched Gwen romp with her "ditties." But the tender feelings were replaced by cold, hard ones again, as he thought of how Will had met Hiram and paroled him; and with his old stern look, Aaron was himself again. Will didn't seem like a son now, but more like a step-son. Hiram and Harvey seemed like the only true Morrises.

"Me wants my mamma! me wants my mamma!" and Baby Gwen, quite tired out with her play, got up and began to look about her, in wonder, continuing to cry out:

"Me wants to do to my Foy, me wants mamma." Mr. Morris thought Floy was still in the house, as he had not seen her leave; so went in to send her out to the child.

"Florence, Florence," he called, "Oh Florence!" but no Floy could be found, and he saw that she had put the bread in the pans ready for baking.

"Where can she have gone? and what can I do now?" he exclaimed, as he hurried through the rooms looking for her in the most unlikely places.

By this time Gwen was crying piteously, and he was getting quite anxious to find Floy, for he was sure she must be about the place. He called "Florence, Florence!" from each door, but no answer came.

"Well, they think they've worked a sharp trick on me!" and he frowned at Gwen, who turned her baby face helplessly to him; the tears were chasing each other down her cheek, while she sobbed as if her little heart would break.

"Yes, they've brought that baby here to conquer me," he went on. "Polly tried it by calling me 'rebel' and 'traitor,' 'lowed the town would tar and feather me, and hoped they would! Will tried it by defiant looks and informed me that he wasn't a child to be dictated to. Grace—well, Grace thought she'd be mighty smart by pretending thar was nothing goin' wrong and being uncommon good to me. Humph! she probably thought she'd be looked upon with favor even if I did

cut Will off without a cent! But they all found the old man was as good as his word.

"And now they think they'll bring me around with a squallin' baby. But they won't; they must give up their notions and come back if they want any friendship with me. But what can I do with that baby? how can I get her home? for I hate to abuse the baby for the wrongs of her parents."

Then he took the little one and talked baby-talk to her, showed her the clock to amuse her; gave her a ripe apple; and a truce was formed. He found out that he was as good at taking care of babies as when he had babies of his own, in the old happy long ago.

Now if I knew she got here by accident, I'd take her pretty nigh to the gate; but I'm too suspicious of them, to go to so much trouble; I have to show them their schemes won't work," he said. "Hold on! I've hit upon another plan—I think it will work too! Here, baby, take this apple to your mamma." He helped her through the gate and put her in the path which led to the cottage; the baby holding the apple tight and saying, quite pleased, "Datten my mamma appety."

Then he went up-stairs and watched to see that no serious harm came to her.

While he was thus worrying and trying to get rid of Baby Gwen, at Elm Cottage they were terribly worried over her absence.

"Where's Gwen, mother?" asked Floy, as she came in from her trip and failed to see the chubby form which always attracted her attention first.

"Why I don't know, I guess she's in the yard

some place," said Aunt Polly, putting away her glasses. "I've been reading some more about the war and I'm really afraid our boys will never accomplish what they hope to; why the very names of 'em rebs is enough to scare a common man! There's old Beauregard, think what a name for a human being; and a Bragg, too, but I guess he won't brag much if he gets a few more lickens like Rosecrans give him at Mustfreeberuff."

"Why, mother, where is Gwen? I can't find her out of doors any place!" and Floy went through every room in a "twinkle." Aunt Polly ran to the well, then to the cellar, Floy following her, and both looking into places too small for a kitten. Finally, Aunt Polly remembered hearing Gwen say, "Me do to my danpa's wif my Foy."

"Oh," she said, looking somewhat relieved, "she thought you were going down to Osborne's and has tried to follow you. If she got down there they would keep her, of course, sposin' we knowed; but you must run down there right off and see."

Floy ran as fast as she could, but was surprised when she got nearly there to hear her mother, only a few rods behind her, shouting:

"Hurry, Floy! why I could go as quick as you myself!"

"Why, Floy, is anything the matter?" asked Grace as Floy rushed into the doctor's without knocking. Floy was so bewildered and tired she could only look about the room She was very pale too, from fright.

"Gwen's gone! Gwen's lost!" she gasped, and her manner would have scared them if Gwen had been standing in the room.

The wildest excitement prevailed, though the doctor, who happened in soon after Floy, tried to be cool-headed and supposed he was. Aunt Polly by this time had studied out about the time the baby had told her "dood by," and finding it was about two hours ago, it increased the fright intensely.

"I've just come from Judge Burton's, there's no use going out that way," said Grace, white as the fresh laundried muslin she wore. "But we must go every other way, *quick*."

At the word, they each took a different street or alley, looking, inquiring, and sending others on the hunt.

Everybody in town knew Gwen, and, from Judge Burton to the McGuire children, everybody joined in the search for her. Soon the whole town had been gone over, but no trace of her could be found.

Then they met on street corners to plan for a more definite hunt.

Everybody had suggestions to make; everybody tried to explain away the absence. Some thought she had been stolen, and several had seen suspicious-looking persons of late. The train had stopped before it got to the station, and had not waited its usual time when it did come up; a carriage had driven through Mapleton, that day, with a fine-looking gentleman in it, but since Gwen was gone, many remembered that "his eyes didn't look just right." A mean-looking man had been met out of town, a little ways, by some of the country folks, but he had no child with him. Others thought that some wild animal had carried her off; and bear-stories were told in abundance. Others

thought the guerillas had carried her off, and meant to raid the town while the excitement was great in search for her.

Doctor Osborne did not, as a rule, decide a point quickly, but weighed every particular and was usually right in is final opinion. Now he listened to all these stories and conjectures meditatively. Finally, he said:

"No, gentlemen, you're wrong; none of those reasons will do. Wait and I'll unravel this whole thing."

Then he drew Aunt Polly aside and they talked in low tones earnestly; but the nearest heard the words, "Aaron," "for spite," "to bring Will home," "Hiram's paroled"—that was enough; for before it had reached the center of the crowd it had grown from a covert hint to a glaring statement of fact. It was a spark, and the dry supposition was being added which would soon make a great fire of threats.

But stop—there comes the Rev. Miller who, seeing the crowd and guessing its meaning holds up the baby, safe!

A sigh of relief escaped Grace's lips, while a cheer of gladness went up from the crowd.

"Where did you find her, Rev. Miller?" asked the doctor.

"About half-way home from her Grandpa Morris'." replied Rev. Miller, while Gwen finished the explanation by saying:

"My mamma appety, my mamma appety, my danpa dive my mamma appety!"

"Grace clasped the darling close, thinking what

she'd been spared writing to the "papa" who had never seen her. There was a general laugh from the crowd which now dispersed, some going one way and some another, but all with a kindlier feeling toward Aaron Morris.

Sam'l Cline went home that evening, and chopped wood for his wife until dark, the first, 'tis said, since the original war-meeting in town.

"Wa'al, nothing was said about Aaron Morris that he didn't desarve," said Mrs. Edwards at the Osborne gate, as they watched the Elm Cottagers wend their way homeward, a happily united family again.

"O yes, there was," said the doctor," I'm heartily ashamed of my suspicions, and am willing to be kicked two blocks for what I said against him."

The carriage with the fine-looking man came in again in a few minutes, and stopped at Rev. Miller's. It was the presiding elder of the M. E. church and he held meetings for the next two days, having a large and well pleased audience—Baby Gwen was a part of it—and no one found fault with his eyes. The train stopped a little before it reached the station or ran a little beyond, stopped half an hour, or half a minute, and none of the village people suspected that the "gold-headed" president of the company, or any of the employes, was making a practice of stealing babies along the route. Floy was the only one that could see the "soul of goodness" in the accident. She had long been wanting to talk of "Baby Gwen" to her father; and now that he had actually deigned to send Grace an apple she thought she would not only be allowed to speak of Gwen but of Grace and Will as

well. She was not at the cottage long, until she found an excuse to go down to her father's, and away she went with the little bird in her heart almost ready to burst its throat with song.

"I wonder how 'tis best to introduce the subject," she thought at the door; but before she had devised a plan, she and her father were chatting away about one thing and then another. Finally they reached the garden, the orchard and apples. "Now's my chance," thought Floy, and she asked quickly, "From what tree did the apple come that you sent Grace, papa?"

If an electric shock had gone through the old man, or an earthquake had shaken the house, the old man's look of surprise would not have been greater than now.

He gave Floy a hasty withering glance; then gazed into space as if he expected to see some way out of his present dilemma. He had always tried to teach his children that truthfulness was one of the cardinal virtues; that a lie was a lie, and was made all the worse by putting some of truth's clothing upon it.

To hide behind a baby's innocence was more than his conscience would allow, so he wouldn't say he had not sent it, but he told Floy the whole incident, adding:

'I love the baby. Yes, the baby has found the way to the old man's heart. But she must not be allowed to come here any more; for your mother and Will must come to my terms or not come at all, and there's the end of it!"

Floy had had so much hope, that this came to her like a thunder-bolt and she burst out crying:

"But, papa, I love you all, and I know you all love one another, if you'd just own up to it and not say a word about the war."

Mr. Morris took her upon his lap, as he used to so often. He acknowledged that both "Polly" and "William" had some good principles about them; but they had waded right through his "orders and commands," and if they came back it would not be over a bridge of his building; but they would have to wade back and leave their foolish notions and the war on the other side. "No, Florence," he continued, "my word has always been *law* in my family. They trampled it under foot and now they must pay the penalty. Will is no son of mine, nor is Polly anything to me. You need not say another word about them any more."

Floy knew it was better to say no more, for it would only make him more determined to oppose her, when once "set."

For two minutes neither said a word.

"Where did you get that?" he asked, taking the medal from Floy's necklace and going for his spectacles.

"It isn't mine!" said Floy, coloring highly.

"Harrison Osborne," the old man read aloud. "May 17th, 1863." Then looking straight at Floy's face:

"Why, what's that for? and how does it come that you are wearing it?"

Floy hesitated a moment, and then said:

'It was given to Harry for bravery, I believe, and I am wearing it because he sent it to me until he comes home. I presume the reason he sent it to me was, so Grace would be sure to see it, and also his schoolmates."

"Well, well, I admire bravery, even if it is on the wrong side, and would like to know more of this. What are the trees and wagons for?"

"They represent the forest in which the battle was fought, and the wagons are supply-wagons he helped to defend." Then he turned the medal and read from the other side the motto:

"For bravery. True courage is never without its reward. From Gen. T—."

"That's a splendid motto, and a piece of gold like that with the engraving must have cost a nice little sum of money."

Floy was just beginning to congratulate herself upon her escape from even an angry look for her boldness in wearing a Union medal to a house whence the Stars and Stripes had been shot down, when, being through looking at it he handed it back to her with:

"That's a fine medal, indeed, but you must leave it out of my house, Florence; I have no sympathy for the men who are down there trying to take property away from their rightful owners, and don't care to see any of the trophies that cost our brothers in the South so many lives and so much property. No, no, Florence, don't bring that thing here again."

Soon, Floy was on her way back to the cottage, but the little bird in her heart was not singing so merrily as when she passed over the foot-path an hour before.

"The baby has won her way to the old man's heart, the baby has won her way to the old man's heart,' she repeated to herself. "But what's the good of it, for he won't let her in. And he'd stand up for the South if the whole state of Iowa was against him! Oh, dear!"

CHAPTER XII

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

During the long campaign of '63, the Mapleton boys, and indeed the whole of Co. F, had shown themselves tried and true; they had been detailed on several important missions and had won the name of "Old Reliable" from Gen. T—.

Each soldier had the utmost confidence in his steel-hearted young captain, known among them as "Capt. Will," who had often quoted to them, "The old guard never surrenders," and who had been their inspiration at Vicksburg and in many skirmishes. But they needed all the confidence that success can inspire, for the hard pull was yet to be made. The 7th Iowa was thrown in Hooker's army to relieve Thomas at Chattanooga, and, on the morning of the 24th of November, made an attack upon Lookout Mountain, a strongly fortified fortress in such a commanding place as to be almost unattainable.

The army was drawn up on the river bottom a mile below; a huge, solid mass, yet with throbbing heart —a thousand in one—and flashing eye. There flapped in the morning breeze the defiant "stars and bars," far above them against the clear blue sky. The ascent was steep, broken by deep ravines and strongly defended at every flat; but the sight of that usurper waving so exultantly there, stirred the brave hearts under

the blue-coats, and they waited but the command of "Charge!" to dash forward.

Gen. T—'s regiment was sent forward among the first troops. As they scaled the heights to the first flat, not a sound was heard save the crackling of dry under-brush and the sound of soldiers' tread; an ominous, dread stillness above like the hush of nature ere a great storm arises in all its fury.

"Faith, an be jobbers, there's niver a man at hum!" said Pat; "or ilse they're all a slapin'!"

"They'll wake up in plenty of time to send some of us to our long sleep," rejoined a comrade.

"Halt!" and scarcely are they arrayed in line when the tremendous "Boom! Boom!!" of cannons, the "whiz" of bullets as they cut the air, and the dying groans of the fallen, tells them that the battle has commenced.

It took stout hearts to mount o'er the bodies of fallen comrades, and without waiting to listen to their dying call of "Tell my mother—" or "For the love of heaven give me—" to fill their places in the broken ranks and join the death-struggle amid the fearful din and confusion. But cost what it would, the brave men upon whose right arm rested a Nation's safety were equal to the emergency; and though filled with a humanly shudder at the horrible slaughter of noble men about them, sternly, almost fiercely, they steeled the quivering nerves and faced the inevitable.

They rush forward—are driven back. One line cut down, another takes its place, fighting the harder over the prostrate forms.

Late in the afternoon, Gen. T—'s division was al-

most panic-stricken. It had been where the fight was hottest; they had been badly cut up, but had rallied until now when it seemed impossible to resist. But, from a broken, disorderly line, there rang out, firm and clear, a familiar tune. They turned to see "Capt. Will," pale, but with head erect and flashing eye—his face to the foe, as he hurried down the line singing in a full deep voice:

"We'll rally round the flag, boys,
Rally once again,
Shouting the battle-cry of Freedom!"

'Twas a strange sound for the time and place, but it acted like magic.

"We'll rally from the hill-side,
Rally from the plain,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom!"

was taken up by the whole company. Then echoed all along the lines:

"The Union forever! hurrah, boys, hurrah!
Down with the traitor! up with the flag, boys!
We'll rally round the flag, boys—
Rally once again."

They did rally, and this time to drive the enemy from its position and to place the loved Stars and Stripes where had floated the traitors' flag. But where they followed, triumphantly, the retreating foe, Will Morris didn't go.

All unconscious he lay, on the very spot where the victory he had inspired was gained; his face pale as death, and the rich life-blood oozing out from his coat-sleeve—he had fainted from loss of blood. A wound in his right arm had been received some time

before, but with heroic courage he had charged with the crippled arm swinging helplessly, his soul all undaunted by the sting of the bullet.

When he revived, the moon was shining brightly over the scene—as brightly as it shone on Grace's soft brown hair when he had told her he loved her, and saw, by the silver light, the color come and go upon her fair cheek, and the new tender light in her eye. But a sad, sad scene it revealed to-night, as he raised his head and looked around on that terrific picture which would never be effaced from his memory.

In the distance, he could hear the boom and roar that told the battle was still raging; nearer, the groans and cries which pain and death wrung from strong men as they thought of dying there alone, and of their wives, children and mothers, far away, waiting for the home-coming which would never take place.

"You live then, friend; there's a chance for you yet," said a voice near by, and Will looked into the clear eyes of a man of middle-age, sitting against a tree a few feet from him. One limb stretched out at full length and tied up with a bloody handkerchief told he was wounded in the leg, while his dress showed him to be an officer in the Union army.

"Yes; I must have fainted; the last I knew, the enemy fell back and we rushed in," said Will in a voice so faint and tremulous he scarcely recognized it. He attempted to rise, but fell back, too faint to do so.

"You've lost lots of blood, sir, but I guess you'll pull through if we're picked up soon."

"Did you tie this string round my arm?" asked Will.

"Yes; and yonder Confederate soldier furnished the string," said the officer.

"Poor fellow! He's almost dead. I think he is shot in the breast and can't live."

The poor fellow thus spoken of was calling so piteously for "Mary" and his little black-eyed boy, that it was heart-rending.

"Who will answer for this slaughter and suffering, your government or mine?" asked he almost fiercely. "We think we're imposed upon and our interests unprotected, and I suppose you think you're right."

"Poor fellow," said Will, tenderly, "we'll leave the answer to the Great Being who knows the motives which prompt the actions of men, and who is both merciful and just."

"Oh God, 'tis hard to die!" cried the expiring Confederate soldier; "I thought I'd never flinch; shall I never see you again Mary?—oh it will break your fond heart—and my precious black-eyed boy, will I never listen to your childish prattle again after my day's work is over? Oh home, sweet, peaceful home," he went on softly and faintly, "must I die like this, alone? Men, if ye be merciful, write to my home in Georgia's pretty dale and tell them I died unflinchingly; save my thoughts for them. Tell my father I ne'er disgraced the proud name we bore but have done my duty truly and loyally, and that I die for the cause we loved. My mother will weep—but father will tenderly care for them, and oh, he'll be glad I died with my face to the foe."

Will and the Union colonel had both crawled to his side, and Will wept real, manly tears of sympathy as he thought of Grace and mother and his own sweet babe, whose form he had never held in his proud arms.

The kind officer held his canteen to the dying man's lips, and stroking his brown hair said, as tenderly as a woman:

"Poor fellow, where is your home, and what message do you wish to send? We'll write as soon as we reach camp."

"Thank you! God bless you!" came from the pale lips. Then rousing himself with renewed ambition: "Tell Mary that her sweet face has been my guiding star through all the weary marches, and when the bullets flew thickest; for the home we loved I fought my best. But never—oh never again will I see it! In my pocket is her dear, hopeful letter—I got it the night before the battle. By it you can see where to write. But leave her picture next my heart—the child with her is Charley—tell him to never forget to care for her who gave him birth—'tis his father's dying charge! We'll meet in heaven—live for it, mother—Mary—keep on praying in your quiet home to-night." The head fell back exhausted. "O kind sirs, can you say a prayer?"

A moment's hesitation fell. Will felt deeply the sense of his own littleness in the sight of God, whom in the strength of his manhood he had neglected, but who alone could help now, when human aid could go no further. He thought of his promise to Grace, which in a measure he had kept; but God had seemed so far

away when he tried to pray, and he had kissed the passages she had marked in her little testament and read them o'er and o'er, thinking of the pure, gentle maiden who marked them, instead of Him whose promises they were.

But now he wished he could pray, trustingly, as she and his good old Christian mother did; and, with the thought of their prayers, he began to hope he might be heard; but, before the first words were uttered, a deep devout "Our Father" came from the man beside him.

"Yes, Our Father," faintly repeated the dying soldier, "we've all—the same—father."

"O, pity and help us all," went on the Union officer. "Forgive the wronging and the wronged. Give peace to this poor boy, for Thine Own Son's sake, and be with his loved ones in their sorrow."

"Amen," came fainter still; a shudder passed over the form, and the black-eyed Georgia boy was fatherless.

"Poor fellow!" said Will, a few minutes later, when the awful sense of the presence of death and suffering had passed away in part. "His home was just as dear to him as ours to us; his wife's tears will be just as bitter as those ours will shed if we do not return." The bare mention of it cost him a pang, for he knew that though only wounded in the arm he was in great danger, if help did not reach him soon.

The pain was getting quite severe now, and he was too weak to run if there should be a flank movement, or the army in front of them be forced back.

The other took the letter—Mary's loving, cheerful letter, full of hopes that the war would soon be success-

fully over and they'd dwell in peace and love in their pretty Southern home—from the soldier's inner pocket. He saw the bright-eyed Charlie of two years perhaps, who smiled at him from the picture; they replaced it in the soldier's pocket reverently, putting the letter carefully away, with the message the dead man had dictated, in his note-book.

"The leaders of the rebellion are to blame for this suffering," said the Union colonel; "Is it not strange how the Southern people are educated from childhood to believe slavery perfectly proper, and from childhood they foster a prejudice against the North, until many of them feel they are doing a noble act in standing by the flag of the Confederacy? Strange how they pray success to the stars and bars, while we pray that the Stars and Stripes may triumph—and we all address the one God who pities and loves us all, whether sinned against or sinning. Thank God, there's another and a better world!"

"What is your name and where is your home?" asked Will, for, as he afterward expressed it, he saw his new friend was made of the "right stuff." "Mine is Wm. Morris of Co. F, 7th Iowa.

"I hail from Illinois—with Grant and Logan; I am of the 22d Illinois," he replied. "I left home in the spring of '62, in time for Shiloh. Have never had a scratch until now."

"Listen! there's firing to the left of us," said Will; "the rebs are making a flank movement. They'll keep it up all night, and they may come over us again."

"Whist!" came a noise from behind a thicket near; "ye'es hed better cum roight in here wid meself," and Pat emerged from his hiding-place.

"Begorrah! an' ef it ain't Capt Morris hissilf—an air ye'es kilt, Capt. Morris, intirely?"

"No: only a wound in the arm," said Will, brightening at the sight of a familiar face, but darkening perceptibly as it dawned upon him how Pat came there.

"Pat, how came you here? Do you know what they do with deserters?"

"Desarters is it, ye'es calls it? An' I'm a wounded soljer loike yersilf, an my clothes air a-full of bullets I can skercely carry 'em!—Whist! Here comes some rebs." And he disappeared in the woods.

'Twas a gray-coat getting plunder, and soon they saw a Union officer on a big yellow horse ride into the field; the gray-coat had raised his musket to take aim at him as he came in range when Will saw him.

"Shoot that reb! For heaven's sake—he's aiming at Gen. T—!" said Will.

"My musket isn't loaded."

"Take mine here!"

The gun was fired; Gen. T— rode unconsciously on in safety. With a sigh of relief, Will saw "Old Yaller" soon gallop away. If Gen. T— had only known of this narrow escape and of his deliverer's need, how quickly a wagon would have been sent that way!

CHAPTER XIII

"DEAD ON THE FIELD"

" 'Twas a glorious victory," the telegrams said; "a glorious victory, only five thousand lost all told." Such was the glad tidings which ran joyfully over the wires; such was the tidings gladly repeated through the crowd that had gathered at the depot in Mapleton to get the earliest report.

The girls had come down from school to wait until after the mail at three o'clock.

Floy, foremost of the group of school girls, stood arm in arm with Mame Edwards, her cheeks burning and eyes kindled; while towering with excitement above them, and conspicuous among the crowd, was Hannah Edmonds' calico sun-bonnet; and Hannah's sallow face underneath it, showed the anxiety she felt to hear who was among the five thousand.

"Not Jack," she whispered, so audibly that Floy heard it and gave the long hand a little squeeze, as it lay on her shoulder; Mame heard it too, and her face grew scarlet, for at the moment, she was whispering those same words to herself.

Grandma Clarkson, though over seventy, had hobbled down, for she had three grandsons in Co. F, and Co. F was in the battle. Jim's little boy Ben clung to her hand, and glanced from time to time into her wrinkled face to know if "pa was dead or any-

thing;" the tears or smiles coming on his face as a reflection of hers.

Everybody visited some neighbor to pass away the tedious waiting; everybody but Hannah, who just waited for news.

Folks called her cross and soured; but there was a warm corner in her heart, and there Jack Riley was enshrined. Once she had been happy and blithesome as the lassies who now made the school-hall ring in Mapleton; but disappointed in her one love affair, and left to "go it alone," she had termed her independent life "caring for an aged father and mother," until their death, a few years before; and now the stern, black side of life was all she could see.

A gleam of sunshine came to her through her love for Jack, her only sister's son. He had been left to her care, since a little playful fellow of five, when his mother died. Soon afterward his father married again, but Jack was still left at the farm with the old folks and Hannah. A mischievous, teasing boy was Jack, who loved to see "Aunt Hannah" get mad; and when, as a last resort, she would whip him, he would laugh at the whole performance, saying:

"Lay it on a little harder, Hanner; you're dusting my coat in fine shape! Go it, old girl!" And despairingly she would finish with a "tongue lashing," then smile to herself at his grit, while he bounded off with "Shep" for a rabbit chase.

But she couldn't spare Jack for any country or flag, and after lying awake all night, spilling all the cream this morning by losing her hold on the jar before she had it o'er the table, and putting the coffee in the

tea-kettle. 'Lucky it warn't the rile stuff though," she had told Grandma Clarkson. For it wasn't in Hannah Edmonds to be wasteful. She had hitched "Old Dobbins," whom Jack always called "Old Bones," whom he vowed wouldn't cast a second-class shadow, to the buggy, and came herself for the news.

"Wa'al, ef there aint Hannah Edmunds jest as ankshus about Jack Riley as ef he was the best feller in the world. Now he'd never min' her, an' 'twould be a good riddance, I'd think. But she would allus crawl on her hands and knees to work fur the shiftless boy, and she was well nigh wild over his goin' to the war," said old Grandma Clarkson.

"Poor Hannah!" said Mrs. Miller, the minister's wife, one of the group in the background. "She loves Jack as the brightest thing in her life. Think how faithfully she took care of those old people too; I feel sorry for her—so sorry. She works like a man, indoors and out."

"That Jack Riley wuz never very good at helpin', I've heerd," said grandma; "but, of course, she spiled him herself! Here, Ben, don't lose yourself. What wuz it the man said?"

"Message for Doctor Osborne, from Harry Osborne," the operator has said.

The crowd around the office-window fell back as the doctor wedged his ponderous body through.

Why should he tremble so? After each battle the boys had sent a message, sometimes Clay sending it, sometimes Harry. An awful pause fell for a moment, then he who had been the strength of so many, reeled against the railing, while his quivering lips and

blanched face told the by-standers the worst news had come. At last, he gasped piteously:

"My God, who will break it to his mother?"

"Who is it, Doctor Osborne? what is it?" asked Floy Morris, taking the message from his hand and reading:

"HEAD-QUARTERS U. S. ARMY.

To DR. OSBORNE, Mapleton, Iowa:

Will is wounded in the arm; Pat says he saw him, and—oh, help my mother bear it—Clay is dead!

HARRY OSBORNE."

Aunt Polly Morris came into the station-door in time to hear her exclamation of "Will's wounded! and —oh dear! Clay's—" The awful word was never uttered, but everybody knew and everybody was deeply touched by the tidings.

"O, my poor boy!" and "Heaven pity Clay's poor mother!" came almost simultaneously from Aunt Polly's ashen lips. "But they were true blue; thank God, they fell at the post!"

Someone saw Grace coming, wheeling Baby Gwen in her pretty new buggy that Will had sent the money for and asked Grace to get it as "a present from papa for her first birthday gift."

The little one was laughing happily and she called out "baby, bye bye!" to Guy Harrington, who came out to meet them.

Grace and Aunt Polly had come down to Doctor Osborne's, that afternoon, and the Doctor was to go for the news while they stayed with his wife. She could not go to the depot, for the waiting and the dread of the news had given her a nervous headache.

But Aunt Polly couldn't wait. So she found some excuse for going down, and finally, Grace had started down "to meet father" when the first message of the victory had been carried up town by some one.

Guy wished he hadn't come out to meet her; though he had felt so sorry for them, he thought he must do something; but he wished he hadn't come, for, "What news, Guy?" came from Grace's mouth before she reached him.

What could he say—he could not imagine! He had pitied her so, and had come out to get Gwen, who was quite fond of him; but to have to tell her—!

"Chattanooga is taken, but—" he began.

"But what?" she demanded quickly, as he hesitated.

"Guy Harrington, tell me, is my husband—?" Every trace of color had left her face and her great eyes were dilated to their full extent.

But Doctor Osborne had reached her in time to spare Guy, who actually cried like the rest as he watched her face.

"Grace, my dear daughter—" he began.

"Don't keep it back," she cried. "Tell me—is Will dead? or the boys?"

"We have a hard thing to bear, Grace, but you must help mother bear it. Will is wounded in the arm—"

"Oh, he'll get well then," broke in Grace.

"Yes, but—Clay is dead!" and there he broke down.

Clay dead! Clay? Why it didn't seem possible. Cool-headed, clear-sighted Clay never got into the troubles venturesome Harry had—she had never feared for Clay.

"Dead!" she repeated; "O, no, no—not dead! What

will mother do! oh, Clay, Clay!" and laying her head on her father's shoulder she sobbed aloud.

"Someone must go to the house and tell mother," she said presently; "someone must go alone!" So 'twas arranged for the doctor to do it himself, since if anybody else went she would suspect the awful truth at once.

Oh, it was so hard to bear! She tried to meet it like a brave Christian woman; she tried to remember he died in a noble cause; but she loved him so. Death seemed so sad for Clay; he was just reaching manhood and had such a flattering prospect of a happy, useful life.

Among the friends who called to show their sympathy was Hannah Edmonds. As she noticed how every body felt so sorry over this one boy, she couldn't keep from wondering "who, but her, would have mourned if it had been Jack?"

"Don't take on so," she said, when Mrs. Osborne broke down and sobbed: "My boy will never come home again!" "Don't take on so, 'tis wicked. Lots of people's only boys is tuk. What if it had a-bin both of 'em?"

Grace wanted to start for Will at once, though she wouldn't know where to find him and could only wait.

'Twas a long night that followed; lights were left burning in many homes, all through it; for the two messages were all that came, and other boys had not been heard about. The mail was watched eagerly on the second and third days afterward, and the fourth, everybody thought, would bring the papers, and letters too, perhaps.

Half an hour before the train was due, a crowd of men, women and children were at the station. Hannah had come down again, although she was "always opposed to women a-gaddin' around." Now she sat in the cart and held old Dobbins, wondering why women, with men-folks to send, came swarming with the crowd.

A subdued sound from the noisy assemblage marked the sympathy they felt for those in sorrow, as Doctor Osborne came down. It was his first time away from home since that stunning blow fell upon it.

While waiting, Widow Edwards walked over to Hannah and talked as kindly as could be, though they hadn't spoken for over three years, when they had had a little "fuss."

Just as the train heaved in sight, old man Wells came rushing from the mill, congratulating himself upon "being on plenty of time to get the earliest news and he wouldn't lose but a few minutes either; loafing round the depot didn't help matters a bit!"

The newsboy's papers were in great demand. Hannah and Mrs. Edwards looked over one together. There was Clay Osborne's name among the slain, and Capt. Wm. Morris among the wounded.

A quick "What's that? Great heavens!" came from miller Wells, who had found the name "Clark Wells" among those taken prisoners.

"Andersonville! Better dead at once!" exclaimed the old miller. "I told him not to go! I told him not to go!" But tears filled his eyes as he turned sadly homeward to take the news to the boy's loving mother.

The mail was followed by the eager crowd to the

postoffice. Floy Morris had come directly there from the Osborne home, where the "cottagers" had stayed most of the time waiting news from Will.

Doctor Osborne got a letter from Harry, and putting it tenderly away, he and Floy went up to the house to read it.

Mame Edwards and her mother both got letters, but Mame's was addressed in the same hand-writing as the one Hannah Edmonds had grasped so eagerly, bearing the superscription "Miss Hannah Edmonds," at the first sight of which, she had cried out, "It's from Jack! Hurrah, he's all right then!"

'Twas the first letter Mame had ever received from Jack Riley, and its excuse for being written it told—'twas the night before the battle.

"We're right outside the rebs' picket lines, and to-morrow morning we'll go for them and they for us. Bullets are mighty hard things to dodge down here; so there's no telling what'll happen, and I feel like doin' the sentimental somehow, and keep thinkin' about you, Mame, all the time. I'm only Jack Riley, but I love Mame Edwards, and if I pull through this war and ever have a home, I'm going to ask you to live in it. This is funny truck to be saying when I never went with you but two times in my life, and always had a notion you wouldn't have stood it then if it had not been you hated to mitten me. But I've had my eye on you ever since you used to come to school in your bare feet and checked apron. I'll never get over it. Don't be hard on me—don't make fun of me, even if you do think I'm a fool, for we all feel as blue to-night as our coats. If I never see you again, good-bye. Yours truly, JACK RILEY."

On the envelope he had written: "The finder will please send this to Mame Edwards, Mapleton, Iowa.

Then he had written, after the battle:

"P. S. I found the letter in my pocket myself, so I guess I'll send it myself. We've had a horrible fight. When we got in we just went at it like tigers We whipped 'em clean out, too; but Clay Osborne's killed. A fine fellow as ever was, too, and not a bit stuck up, as I used to think afore I knew him well; and Will Morris, our captain—an old stunner on the fight, too, he aint afraid of nothing—well, he's wounded; arm off, I guess. I don't feel like braggin' over beatin' the rebs a bit. Here's Harry Osborne in our camp looking like a ghost, and he bursts out crying whenever he sees any of Clay's traps. Be dogged if I don't feel blamed choky myself. It will be mighty hard on the Osborne folks. I know you'll go and see them, and tell 'em you're sorry. Would you be sorry if it was me? I dare say my old aunt is nigh wild over me. I guess I'll write to "Hannah' since I'm goin' it on this line. Say, won't you write to a feller sometimes? it's harder work keeping a "stiff upper lip and powder dry" down here than you've any idea.

"Reckon you know thet John's our lieutenant now, and a dandy one he is too; guess the Osborne boys got him the job. Poor Tip's a-writing home now, I guess; for he's a stoppin' every once and a while and wipin' his eyes, keepin' his face turned away. He's all-fired plucky, Tip is, but this has pretty nigh used him up.

'Guess I'll go out and cool off, or I'll be a blubberin' too.

"Write to me, please. I never said please to a

woman in my life before, but you're different.

"JACK RILEY."

Mame read it at the office-window, and Hannah Edmonds, who watched her jealously, felt kinder toward the girl she had always thought a "stuck-up chit tryin' to put on airs over the fine clothes her mother sewed for;" she had felt sure the letter was from Jack, for "he allus had a hankerin' arter the little flip" and Mrs. Edwards had got one from John, for she said so.

As she was driving Dobbins toward home, Mame happened to be at her gate, and with an uncommon pity for the "poor lonely woman," she said, smiling so sweetly that Hannah knew she wasn't making fun of her:

"Won't you come in and rest a while, Miss Edmonds? Ma is just home and would like to talk it all over, I know."

Hannah was quite melted, and felt a little choky as she stopped Dobbins, saying:

"Wa'al, I don't care if I do rest a little spell; I'm well nigh tuckered out with worrying and trottin' about."

"Yes, do come in and sit a spell," said Mrs. Edwards, coming to the door, "and Mame, you fly round and make us a cup of tea—the rale stuff to-night; my nerves are just completely unstrung with the sad news; Take this easy chair, Hannah. Poor Mrs. Osborne! they say she takes it mighty hard!"

After tea, which Mame prepared in a hurry, Hannah jogged on home with a lighter heart than usual.

In the meantime, Harry's letter was being read up at the Osborne house. The doctor did it, though at times he could not see the words, and more than once

broke down completely; so they all cried together. It did them good, though.

MY DEAR MOTHER AND FATHER AND DARLING SISTER:

It breaks my heart to think of you weeping to-night, as I know you are, and I not there to help you bear it. But my darling mother taught us boys that there is a higher power than man's to depend upon in the darkest night. I wish I could lay my head in your lap, as of old, mother, and tell you all about it, but there isn't much; only the cold, cold fact.

After the battle, I was passing along over the field, stopping here and there with some poor wounded fellow—sometimes blue and sometimes gray; they all lay there together and all had mothers, wives or someone who loved them—when suddenly my eyes fell upon Clay! Dead on the field—dead without a word; but father, mother, dead with his face to the foe! He had fallen just as the victory was gained; for he lay just where the last work was taken. No one but God can ever know what I felt when I found Clay there—"

Here some words were blotted out with Harry's tears. The doctor stopped; Grace wound her arm lovingly about her mother and they wept together. Floy, who sat on a stool at Aunt Polly's feet, sobbed aloud, till Gwen came from her "ditty" to say 'Poor Foy." The tears brought relief and the doctor read on:

"The night before the battle, mother, I went apart from the rest and, thinking of you and home and the dangers the battle would bring, I knelt down alone to pray, when Clay came out and knelt beside me. He put his arm about me and said, as tenderly as you

would have done: 'Dear Harry, let us pray together the prayer mother taught us to say at her knee; for we may not see her again in this world.' And we said 'Our Father' together. I told him we must not think of the dark side, that we were in the right, and must both pull through. 'I wouldn't shirk duty if I could,' he said, 'but there will be many lives lost to-morrow, and why not one of us among them? But I'd rather die than have to tell mother! Darling mother! she loves her boys so! But cost what it may'—and he looked so proudly grand—'cost what it may, we'll put the Stars and Stripes on yonder height and tear down that rebel flag!' And I'm so glad he lived to see the Stars and Stripes floating there against the sky. Don't cry, mother; but I am crying too! How I wish I was there to comfort you, who always kissed our tears away! We know that Clay has just gone home—to that home where no war nor death can come. But oh, what shall I do without him! My grand old patriotic father will be glad to know, that he was a valiant soldier; true as the steel of his musket to the cause of the Union.

"I couldn't find Will, after storming the lines on the evening of the 24th—and, Grace, you may well be proud of him, for he rallied a panic-stricken line and led them to the fiercest of the battle by his own brave daring. But he was wounded even while he enthused his scattered troops. He was wounded in the right arm, and perhaps he will lose it, the surgeon at the field-hospital said, but he will get well. He was sent to St. Louis, I think. Oh, 'twas a great victory, they say all through the camp; but the cost—the cost!

"We'll stand by the old flag though, father, mother, Grace. Don't weep; be brave and strong; for we're freeing a million of down-trodden people and holding this proud Union united and safe, and 'twill pay, though my life among the many may yet be required, and though our suffering be deep as the wound in our nation's heart.

"I thought at first I'd try to send Clay's body home, so it could be laid by our little sister we never saw, and where we could put flowers over his grave—he loved them so. But I think he'd rather be buried where he fell; so we laid him to sleep with the 'brave and the true' who fell with him, with the flag he loved wrapped round him.

"And when the war is over, we'll come down and plant flowers upon it; so they will grow all over the long grave, and live bright, and beautiful, as the noble deeds of those who sleep beneath them. Keep on praying for the success of our troops; God is for the right—but oh! 'tis hard to see that this is for the best! Write soon. Your loving boy, HARRY."

"Just think of that dear, brave boy, never thinking of giving up, come what will," said Aunt Polly, after a few moments of that dead, heart-trying silence which comes with such pathos in real anguish.

"He's a boy to be proud of!"

Then she stopped short with a tremor in her voice, thinking of her own dear boy who must always wear an armless sleeve, even if life be spared him.

" 'Twill almost kill Will to lose his right arm," burst out impetuous Floy, "Oh dear, dear! If only there had been no cruel war!"

"Thank God! we'll bear the loss of limb, if need be," said Grace softly, wiping away the tears that fell like rain on little Gwen's bright hair, making her little face take a puzzled look, as one little hand wiped tear after tear from Grace's cheek; and she said:

"My mamma ky? poor mamma hut herself?"

Floy kissed the darling quickly, and Grace held her close as she began laying plans for Will's comfort in the hospital and his speedy home-coming.

"He'll be sure to be sent to St. Louis, won't he, father? and I must go to him at once;" looking wistfully at Gwen, she added, "Yet my baby would miss her mamma."

"Of course she would. I'll go to Will," said Aunt Polly, decidedly, "I've nussed him through many a sickness, and know just how to manage him."

"Let me go," said Floy, "wouldn't I do—Lois would help me see what to do, and I do want to do something so bad."

"We need you here, Floy, to help us all," said the doctor, "you've been doing the right thing to help lighten the burden."

During these dark days, Floy had tried to show she was sorry, in ways that would give comfort and cheer; she could not tell her sympathy in words. A fresh bouquet she kept on the table, made from Mrs. Osborne's house-plants; the doctor's chair was wheeled before the fire with his dressing-gown and slippers in it, each time when he came in; she had kept Gwen out of the family sitting-room when she wanted to romp, but she didn't know anyone had noticed she was trying to help bear the sorrow.

"I'll go down to the station and telegraph to the hospital director at St. Louis to let us know when Will arrives there, if he does, and tell us of his condition," said the doctor, getting his hat and cane. "You'll stay here to night—yes, do;" as Aunt Polly came near objecting, "then you can get the news at once."

"I'll go home and see to things," said Floy, "and then stay—come back here for news." She started to say, "stay at father's all night," but she remembered that father Morris did not allow her to mention Will, and she must talk of Will to-night.

CHAPTER XIV

AT THE HOSPITAL

As Floy left the room she caught a look in Mrs. Osborne's dear, kind face, that made her throw her arms about her neck and kiss her impetuously, saying:

"Bless your dear heart! I'm so sorry for you, though I don't know how to say it."

Then she turned to go quickly to hide the tears, that would come, in spite of her determination not to break down any more.

"I must not show my grief in my face; that adds more to what each of you are bearing," said Mrs. Osborne. "Heart-strings all o'er this land are being snapped by this fearful struggle. God help us bear our part! Other hearts than ours are bleeding; think, five thousand, the message said, on the Union side; and that a comparatively small number to the loss on the Confederate side. Think of the weeping, back of those figures, in both North and South! Think of the throbbing hearts and aching heads in the homes left desolate! Thank God, Harry is spared us still, and we'll meet dear Clay by and by!"

The doctor was heard returning with a telegram.

"I met the office-boy at the gate," he said, tearing the envelope hastily, while they all gathered round.

"U. S. Hospital, St. Louis, Mo., Ward M.

"I am here in Lois' ward, doing fine; can be home in two or three weeks. Will Morris."

"Coming home!" cried Floy, gladly, her feelings revolutionized at once.

Grace's heart gave a great bound and catching Gwen, she hugged her tight, whispering:

"Baby, papa is coming soon!" but stopped with a sigh as she thought of that other one who would never come home.

"Yes; comin' home—all that is left of the dear boy," said Aunt Polly.

"But we'll nurse him back to good health and spirits," said Grace quickly. "Oh, I'm so glad, we'll get him so soon!"

"Wasn't it lucky he found Lois?" said Floy. "I know he was glad to see a familiar face at such a time."

"Dear Lois," said Mrs. Osborne, "we will all love her more than ever now."

"She made such a sacrifice to go; you know that was her last year at school; but oh, I'm glad she is with Will!" said Floy.

"Do you think he could come home in two weeks, father?" asked Grace anxiously, "if 'twas as bad as Harry feared?"

"Perhaps he might. I guess I'll run down and come up with him. Will go as soon as I can arrange it. Let me see—you'll stay here with mother, Grace, or all of you, would be better company."

"We'll take mother up to Elm Cottage," said Grace. "You know I want Will to come to his own home; but we'll take good care of mother. 'Twill be so kind if

you'll go! You could really help Will better than any of us."

"That's so; and better'n a strange doctor," said Aunt Polly. "How glad he'd be to have you, he allus took such stock in you!"

"Yes, Harrison, you'd be the best kind of medicine and you'd know what to do," said Mrs. Osborne. "We'll get along here," answering gratefully his solicitous look at her; for the doctor's loving care and gallantry were not lost on his wife, who appreciated the little acts of respect and love he always paid her —and was not slow to acknowledge them—but the special tenderness and feeling in his manner toward her now, was doubly dear.

"Well, let's see then—I could make a general round to-morrow and leave my patients with Dr. Sampson; he's careful, and will follow directions. I'll go to the office now and send Will a message. Poor boy."

"No, no, my danpa do and get the baby tandy!" said baby Gwen, shaking her blonde curls. "No, no, my danpa leave datten baby!"

"Grandpa is going to tell papa to come home to Baby Gwen," said the doctor, never in too much of a hurry to talk to the little one.

"I kiss my papa!" only instead of saying the word 'kiss' she puckered up her baby mouth and made the sound.

Grandma Osborne caught her in her arms, saying:

"Dear little pet! what would we do if it were not for you to make sunshine in the dark? You'll do more to make your papa well than all the medicine, or even Grace's nursing, can do."

"I wonder how he'll see her first! I hope she won't be afraid of him," said Floy. "We'll know he's coming and have her expecting him."

"I'm very anxious to see them together," said Grace. "But we must not plan too fast; he may not be ready to come before several weeks. Send some cheery news, father."

"Hold on!" said the doctor, stopping at the words. "You write the message, Grace; 'twill make him well a week sooner, at least."

Then Grace wrote the message—that Will read over and over—saying that the doctor would start at once and that the rest were waiting his coming.

The doctor took the message, and the cottage folks got ready to go home; for all decided to go now.

'I think I'd better go by and see Mrs. Wells; 'twill take but a short time, and I can be through before dark. Poor woman! 'Tis a hard fate to be in one of those Southern prisons, if they are what they are represented to be," and Grace shuddered as she recalled the picture of want, filth, and misery she had obtained from a sketch of Andersonville she had read recently.

"I'll go by with you," said Aunt Polly. "If we can't do anything to help her, we can, at least, show we are sorry. Floy, you wheel Gwen up home and make a fire."

"I'll do that same, mum," said Floy, with a quick bow. "An 'faith, an' I'll make yees a cup of tae afther yer long exhaustin' walk. Come, Gwen, go 'bye-bye' with Aunt Floy." And off they went, after Gwen had kissed her grandma "night," Gwen jerking an imaginary line and calling, "ge' up, team," "ho, team!"

But after they were fairly started, Floy let the little expressions of glee go unnoticed; for she was quite absorbed in the thoughts that chased each other pell-mell through her usually orderly brain.

Harry's letter rang in her ears; his piteous, "what shall I do without Clay?" brought the hot tears to her eyes. All alone! A mere boy, even if he was brave, true and loyal as any man.

"What if *he* would never come back again?" she thought. "But he must!" and her cheeks burned scarlet, on meeting Guy Harrington just then, as if she feared he might have heard the thought.

He turned, and walked with her for a block; for she and Guy were quite good friends. They were both members of the Senior Class, leaders of it; so they knew each other well. They had had a common interest in the war-news, too, for Guy's two uncles, John and Roy Clayton, were in the army, and Guy was Harry's best friend.

Very pretty, Floy looked that evening, in her neat black merino, "made from her mother's old one," as she had told the school-girls, with her red jacket and fur cap. Guy noticed the tasteful combination and the attractive face adorning the costume; for, though Floy claimed she hadn't one beautiful feature, hers was a face one would notice and study, so bright and speaking. Now the big gray eyes shone and looked wondrous deep and pathetic as they talked over the news of the battle, and Guy eulogized Harry and his exploits —his favorite theme.

'I'm so sorry for Will," said Guy as they reached the corner. "Uncle Roy wrote he was the bravest sol-

dier and the best man in the company and well deserved being at the head of it; and that they would follow him to the very mouth of the cannon. How sad his home-coming will be, in spite of the welcome you'll all give him! Say, I want to help you get ready for him, if you've anything you need someone to do. I meant to have told Grace but I forgot it. I wish I might be of some help."

"Thank you, Guy," said Floy. "Don't suppose there'll be anything we can't do in two or three weeks. My! I can hardly wait! But we thank you just the same."

"Well, I'm off to write to Harry. Good-bye!"

"I'm going to write to Harry, too," thought Floy. "He's so heart-broken now, all his school-friends should write to him, and dear brother Will, poor darling Will, suffering such pain in the hospital!" and her half-stifled sobs made Gwen look round with:

"My Foy ky! me hut my Foy?—poor Foy!"

"Oh, if Will could just come home in the old happy way!—be well and strong, and be welcomed at our old home! Doctor Osborne's presence at the hospital will make all the difference in the world, though, in bringing him home quickly." Then quickening her gait she soon reached Elm Cottage.

When it was known that Dr. Osborne was going down to Will, cups of choice jellies, and delicacies of all sorts came pouring in; until the doctor declared it would take Will a year to eat the lot, and he would have to charter a car, if he attempted to take it with him. But, from the assortment, Aunt Polly selected a valise full of knickknacks she thought might go, saying:

"If Will can't eat it all, there's many a poor fellow there that can help him."

So the doctor set off, with his pockets full of letters and his valise full of goodies.

The late-afternoon sun shone through the latticed windows of Ward M, in the St. Louis Hospital, where, on thirty white cots, were seen thirty white faces; some worn and haggard, some with burning cheeks and staring eyes; others waiting, with restless impatience, the return of strength that they might go to their homes and be nursed back to health by loving wives, mothers and sisters.

Moving among them from cot to cot, with soothing words and helping hands, see this sweet-faced girl in dark-brown dress and blue ribbons. 'Tis the gay, sprightly Lois; but changed by the sight of suffering and sorrow into a more subdued, womanly creature—thoughtful and helpful, a blessing in that place where real beauty in character shines brightest.

"Lois, what time is it, please?" asked a voice near a window, where, propped up by the pillow, sat a man with the decided face and keen gray eyes of Wm. Morris.

"Only ten minutes after two, Mr. Morris, and the train won't be due until three," said Lois, coming quickly to the sick man's side. "And you must not be too sure that Dr. Osborne will come by this train; something might have delayed his starting."

"O no! What did the message from Grace say?" with some impatience in the tone. "That he would start the thirtieth, and that was yesterday. He'll come

when that train comes; and oh, he'll be straight from my Grace and baby! When did you say you were last at home, Lois?"

"In June," she replied, her hands tearing fresh bandages and rolling them into neat rolls; "Baby Gwen was but eighteen months old then, but she was putting words together and talking, ma says, so cunningly. She would say, 'Me a minny! Me a minny,' when she saw something she wanted; or, 'I pank my dogie!' which she would do with vigor. But you must be very quiet now and keep down all excitement or the doctor will not be allowed to see you."

Then she went to another cot where a little boy lay in high fever; he was the drummer boy of the 24th, N. Y., brought after the same battle "above the clouds," as Will Morris and Col. Lockridge. She pitied him so; such a mere boy, with clusters of brown curls which the physicians said must be cut off to-morrow if the fever didn't go down. The hot head, tossing restlessly from side to side, grew quiet as she bathed it, and the parched lips whispered:

"That's right, mother! you always knew just what to do for a fellow, and I was most roasted!"

"Poor boy! How your mother would weep bitter tears if she knew," murmured Lois, for a year's experience in the hospital had rendered the sight of suffering familiar to her, but none the less touching; and now, as keenly as when she first looked on the ward of sufferers who were to her heroes as well as sufferers, her sympathies were aroused. New patients came from day to day, and in many, to whom she gave the care a daughter or sister might, she had become especially

interested. But she had always watched for a familiar face, dreading lest she should see it; and one day her own features had paled when Will Morris had been carried into her ward!

How her heart ached for Grace! But in response to her pitying face and words, he had replied with a smile, though the signs of pain he could not conceal:

"'Tis an honorable discharge from duty, Lois. I will get to see my Baby Gwen now, perhaps, before going back to service."

Col. Lockridge was among those brought into Lois' ward, and by Will's request he was given an adjoining cot.

Together they had read the account of the battle of Chattanooga—knew how the victory was won which had cost them so dearly. When Lois left them now they reverted to the subject again, despite her injunction of quiet.

"That grand idea of charging the whole line was a master-thought," said Will, his pallid face lighting up with enthusiasm. "That was a grand move—Gen. Grant won his laurels by it!"

"And he'll wear them, too," replied Col. Lockridge.

"That's so!" came from several cots in the neighborhood.

"It must have been a terribly magnificent sight! But many a fine fellow fell ere the rifle-pits were gained," said the colonel. "But thank God, the field was won; for the price of defeat would have been the same or greater, with nothing to soften the blow!"

"Yes; I almost dread to meet Father Osborne, I know he will feel the loss of his son so keenly. But

he will never regret that he went at his country's call; for the grand old man was determined to go himself at first, but finally remained at home. Both his sons went. Clay, the one killed, was but twenty and the other but fifteen. Dr. Osborne will be reconciled to Clay's noble death, though he'll feel the loss keenly.

"Osborne?" repeated a man near by, "was the other Harry Osborne, a blue-eyed boy?"

"Yes; that's Harry! Where did you see him?" asked Will, interested, for Harry was his pride.

"At Champion Hill, or rather defending some supply wagons on the morning afterward. I'll be hanged, if he didn't lay it across any man there. The rebs were five to one, but he fought like a young tiger!"

"The boy showed his pluck there, I guess; you were in a fix," said Will.

"Yes; we'd have had to surrender and be now starving in Andersonville if that boy hadn't rallied us. He deserved a promotion for his service there. What did they do with him?"

"He's still in the ranks. But Gen. Grant came in person and gave him the tattered flag, and Gen. T— gave him a gold medal with the date of the skirmish upon it. That pleased Harry better than a command. He won't be eighteen until spring."

Lois came back now with a glad look on her face which made Will start and rise excitedly, while he asked:

"Has he come? Is the train in?"

"Yes, to the last question; and for the other, watch the door."

He did look expectantly, nor had he long to wait

until Dr. Ackton, one of the hospital surgeons, entered followed by a portly gentleman in black, with a good-natured, helpful face, full of sympathy now as he glanced around the ward. His eyes met Will's in a moment and the face was a mixture of pleasure, regret, pride and sorrow. And before the surgeon had said, "Miss Lois, is an officer named Capt. Wm. Morris here?" Doctor Osborne stood beside the couch of him who had always seemed to him the embodiment of physical strength and manly courage. In his experience as a physician and surgeon, the sight of pain and death were not unfamiliar to him, but at this picture of wounded and dying gray-haired fathers, strong men of middle age, and plucky boys—and knowing what brought them here—his great heart beat its fastest tattoo, but 'twas a martial air.

"Will, my poor dear boy, I'm sorry to find you thus," and he grasped heartily the left hand, while his own hand trembled with suppressed emotion.

"Most of me is here, father—and the flag still floats," was the ringing reply which made many a pale face light up. "You have given more than I, father," thinking of the brave, gallant boy who would never return even with loss of limb. "I'm so sorry for you, and with you!"

"Bless you, my boy;" the usually firm voice quivering. "It was a hard blow to us, while, in a general way, we feared the worst, knowing it was one of the chances of war; yet we felt it, like a blow, when it actually came home to us."

Lois had been standing a little apart, feeling that it would be intrusion to break in upon that first meeting;

now she came forward with both hands extended and a bright smile, in spite of the sad pitying look in the brown eyes.

"Dr. Osborne, you're not going to slight me?"

"Slight you? No, indeed, my dear girl," he said, quickly taking both the hands in his—the hands that had ministered to so many suffering and helpless men—and gazing kindly into the upturned face. "I'm glad to see our brave little woman looking so bright and happy. Your face has good deeds written all over it. Your mother sends lots of loving messages to you, which I will tell you about as I recall them; and your father sends a letter to his 'soldier-girl,' as he appropriately calls you."

"He sometimes calls me that in his letters. It does me lots of good, for it reminds me that my coming here pleased him. You know he had no sons to go into the ranks," said Lois, brushing a tear that glistened for a moment on her eyelashes. "I'm glad I came."

"So am I," said Will, fervently.

"So am I," and "so are we all," came from various cots down the ward.

Lois stopped, in pleased confusion, at the unexpected praise, and the old doctor laughed his congratulations.

"Here's a budget of letters, Will," said Dr. Osborne, "and a valise full of knickknacks; which will you have first?"

"The letters—Grace's letter, please," said Will, eagerly selecting it from the bunch of letters and notes of sympathy that people would insist upon sending.

"She sees the bright side to even this," said he, folding it caressingly. "Oh, I'm so anxious to see her and my darling little baby. I'll get well soon when I reach home. Do you think I can enter service again by the New Year, doctor?"

The doctor looked surprised.

"It strikes me you've had enough of it. I've been thinking you could take care of all our folks and I'd go myself this time. But there's time enough to think of that. Now, sir, you are to keep quiet, think of Baby Gwen and the romp you'll have, and get on your pegs."

While, in the week that followed, the doctor made Will his special care, many a poor sufferer shared his time and help, and blessed his coming. Col. Lockridge, Will and he had many good talks, and confidences were exchanged about their homes and personal affairs. The colonel's family was a large one and he loved to talk of his two black-eyed boys—one ten, the other three—and his four girls, two between and two older than the boys, so that each of them claimed he had two sisers to take care of him.

Col. Lockridge was practicing law in Evanston at the time of his enlistment in the spring of '62. A home letter came to him while he was at the hospital and he had Lois, Will and the doctor hear it.

A new link to their friendship resulted from this admittance behind the curtains a man draws around the affairs of his own home-life to keep out the rude gaze of strangers; and when the colonel was able to leave the hospital a few days before Will could travel, it was with a genuine regret that their intimacy, formed

under such impressive circumstances and extended into real friendship, should end so soon.

In parting, Will held the hand that had bound up his wound on that night when he lay helpless, and said, earnestly:

"Col. Lockridge, you're a man after my own heart. I admire your make-up, besides I owe you a debt which words can not repay—"

"Tut, tut, Morris, don't mention that again! That was nothing, as I've told you before, when you would heap thanks upon me. 'Twas nothing to tie a handkerchief above a cut; any human being would have done it, particularly as it was not my own bandanna. I'm debtor to you for knickknacks and social entertainment; indeed, Morris, if there's a balance in our account it's in your favor."

"No, no, I'm the debtor," said Will. "If I can ever serve you in any way, command me; 'twould give me real pleasure. And let me hear from you, sometimes. You will return to the service?"

The colonel nodded assent.

"So shall I," continued Will. "Then, may you be kept safe and sound to join in the shout of victory!"

"Amen!" said the colonel. "Good-bye—God bless you! Trust Him, Morris, as your personal friend, tried and true, in battle or in peace."

One more friendly grip, a hasty good-bye to the boys in that corner, then he sought the faithful Lois at little Charlie's bedside where she spent most of her spare time.

"Lois, little soldier-girl, good-bye," he said, "you are doing a noble work here; I shall tell my girls

about you. I shall never forget the little woman who nursed me and all of these poor fellows when most comfort was needed. Crying? You're working too hard, Lois, you must go home with Capt. Morris, as your father wrote you, and rest awhile."

"It is not that I'm so tired, but that I can't do more to relieve the suffering and sorrow about me. I wish I could do more; that would rest me! But no; in cases where I would help, I can only pity. May be I will go home, awhile, with Mr. Morris; I can't tell yet," looking regretfully at Charley, whose eyes were closed as if in sleep, but she saw his lips quiver and a tear sparkle on his lids. Col. Lockridge saw it, too, and sighed; then said:

"Go soon, at any rate, and now good-bye, little helper. Will you take a small keepsake to remind you, when peace is restored, that your work was appreciated?" He took a lady's locket from his pocket and dropped it into her hand. "I bought it for my own daughter's birthday on Christmas, but I will get her another."

Her eyes were brim-full now and so was her heart; so she could scarcely say: "I thank you," before he was gone. On the inside was a slip on which he had written:

"A token of the debt of gratitude a wounded soldier would pay to the loyal, patient woman who helped him when help was most needed.

"U. S. HOSPITAL, WARD M., ST. LOUIS."

A low sob attracted her attention, and turning, she saw Charlie, crying now, and the pale death-like look smote her.

"Charlie, what's the matter? you must not cry, dear."

"I can't keep it back any longer! Oh, why are you going away? What will I do without you--die here all alone! you've been so kind and good, mother couldn't have been better, but oh—!" And the sentence ended in a piteous sob.

"Poor Charlie!" she said, as she stroked his hair tenderly; "I won't go if you don't want me to. But now you must be very quiet or you will get worse."

"I don't want to be selfish and mean—but I will never get well—don't shake your head, you know it, and the doctor knows it; I can see it in your faces. But oh! how can I die all alone, so far from home, and you gone away—"

"Charlie, I will stay right here, I don't care much about going, anyway. I can go later just as well."

"Won't you feel disappointed?" queried he, his eyes full on her face.

"Not a bit. Now go to sleep, while I fan you." The satisfied smile that came over the wan face paid her a thousand times for any pang the first thought of postponing her visit cost her.

Two days later, Will Morris left for home with Dr. Osborne. In his glad face and excited manner, Lois read something of what the word "home" meant, after the battle and camp-scenes so fresh in his memory. With a mite of regret her eyes follow them after they had bidden her God-speed in her work of mercy. Lois Miller had reached a high place in their opinions; they had known her as a merry laughing girl, full of pranks and one who loved the sunshine of life and nature; here a new side to her character was revealed,

and they found her, in all a woman's tenderness, pitying the wounded, caring for the dying, like an angel of mercy; nor was the nerve to stand trying scenes wanting. Many times she had assisted the surgeons when needed, only a pale shadow on her face showing that the scene was painful to witness.

"I shall take a good report to your father and mother, Lois," the old doctor had said at starting; "they'll be proud of their 'soldier-girl,' and they have cause to be, and the reason for which she stays away will please them. Bless you!"

She kept repeating the words to herself as she left the window, after waving the last good-bye.

Charlie was delirious that afternoon and his fever was high; the doctor shook his head ominously, when he saw him.

"Not long for this world, Miss Lois," he said, and Lois' tears fell as he called for "mother," and talked of the hills and trees, where he thought he was once again chasing rabbits. He had told her so much of his mother in her checked apron and white cap, of his gray-haired father and married sisters, that it seemed she knew them, too; and she sighed to think how sad they'd feel when they knew their truant boy would never return. For Charlie had gone into the army against their wishes, and was now but fifteen, a slight frail lad. Poor Charlie! Life had been so short.

Next morning a hard, pinched look on the sweet young face told that the doctor was right, and Lois shuddered as she chafed the small icy hands.

At noon when the omnibus came she was standing near the window. Several wounded men were helped

into the house and—what was it that made her start and tremble so violently? was it—? Yes; that unconscious one brought in, like a dead man, was John Edwards!

'Twas the face in search of which she had been scanning that of each arrival since her coming there, dreading lest she should see it, and the sight drove every bit of color from her own. For a moment she reeled against the window-casing, then with strong reaction got to the hall as they passed her door.

"Dr. Acton, bring him in here, please; 'tis an old friend of mine."

"Certainly, Miss Lois," and he looked kindly at the startled face, usually so calm.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Lois, the case is not very serious, I think," he said after he had given him a brief but scrutinizing examination. "He has fever, pretty high fever, from a wound in the shoulder. A little operation will be necessary as the bullet is still in; it has been in for several days, and that caused the fever. But in a short time, he will be O. K. I'll be back soon," and he hurried away to help some one in agonizing pain. For a moment she could only gaze at John; then remembering that others were watching, she arranged his pillow and shaded the window near his cot, with a prayer in her heart for his quick recovery.

She made it a point to be away when the doctor came to remove the bullet: for, strong as she had justly prided herself upon being, she couldn't bear the sight of suffering in this man

She hurried to Charlie's bedside, her conscience upbraiding her for staying away so long; and his deathly pallor frightened her.

"Oh, my poor boy! My poor Charlie," she cried; the sobs roused him, the great spiritual eyes looked up at her and read her thoughts.

"Don't cry—Lois, yes—I—think—I—am—dying, but I'm not a bit—afraid. You'll write to mother—it's all dark—now. Let me hold your hand—tell them, I done my best for the old flag. Will live longer—in heaven. Sing, please—'No sorrow there'," and Lois tried but broke down entirely; a smile lighted up the wan face.

"No sorrow"—"mother!" murmured the pale lips, and Charlie had gone home.

That night Lois wrote to the aged father and mother, away off in their country-home, and sent the brown curl she had saved when the ringlets had been shorn She did this as she sat at the bedside of the young officer who had just come in at noon. The dark head tossed restlessly on the pillow—ever and anon he called for "Lois" and "mother," mixing with them something about that professor, then, back with the boys in blue, he'd give command to the company and call the Confederates hard names.

He seemed so different from the quiet, almost stern John Edwards, whom she had always loved to tease; she blushed violently when he called "Lois" and coupled with the name that of her old teacher, Prof. Baker. She pitied him so in his feverish state; she had always thought him so well and strong, it didn't seem possible that he could be thus. But when she put her hand on his hot forehead, instantly he covered it with his own, saying, "Keep it there; it will make me well," and she kept it there, thinking how poor Charlie loved the same act. But she could not account

for the color that came to her own face, and her own increased pulsations. Next morning, when Dr. Ackton made his rounds, he passed Lois with:

"Well, your friend is mending, fever goin' down already You're giving him a little extra care, eh? Now, look here, you spoke the other day of taking a lay-off for a time. Don't think of such a thing until this poor chap can go, too," and the doctor chuckled slyly as he went on and left her. Late in the afternoon, she found John sleeping, a quiet restful sleep, and she watched him. Without noticing it herself, she went on comparing his high forehead and firm mouth with Prof. Baker's rolling brow and thinly chiseled lips. The sleeper stirred, and a pair of calm gray eyes unclosed, not in feverish wildness as before, but with coming intelligence, and looked round at the whitewashed walls.

"Where am I?" he queried, then, in glad surprise, "Lois, Lois!" as he glanced into the face beside him. He gave the little hand she slipped into his an awful squeeze, for an invalid, but Lois excused the presumption; for, perhaps, he was still delirious.

Explanations followed, on each side, as to where he was and how he got there—John remembering that at the skirmish on Brier Creek, he had received a flesh-wound and had been put in the army omnibus; that was all he knew.

"Now you must be very quiet; I'm commander here. I'll get you some supper," said Lois.

"O no! stay by me and talk. That will do me more good than supper. I don't want a mouthful."

'Orders must be obeyed, instantly," looking back a smiling commander, as she went.

When she returned with a plate of nicely browned toast, with butter and jelly for it, and a cup of coffee, and sat down to talk pleasantly while he ate, John found himself a willing subordinate.

"Drink all your coffee," she said, as he stopped to look at her while she told him of Will Morris' home-going, Dr. Osborne's visit, etc. "You must just rest and sleep now, and the doctor says you can go home in a few days."

"No; thank you!" said John, a merry twinkle in his calm eyes. "I think I shall stay right here all the time."

"Indeed? Well, I'm going home on a furlough in a few days, perhaps; and if you've any message to send to your mother I'll bring it her."

CHAPTER XV

THE FURLOUGHS

"Six o'clock," chimed the clock on the corner shelf, as Floy came briskly into the kitchen with a pail of foaming milk. 'Twas Floy's chore, each morn and evening, to milk Brindle and give her the half-bucket of nubbins in pay, but this morning she had done so about an hour earlier than usual, to Brindle's apparent satisfaction.

Grace had put the room "to rights" and set the iron tea-kettle to singing while she went about the breakfast, humming a sleighing song that she and Will used to sing together, in the "Auld Lang Syne." She was laying plans for a busy day

To-morrow Will was coming! At least the message received, the evening before, read: "Will be home by Thursday, perhaps," and the glad light in the violet eyes spoke volumes of what that meant to her.

"Grace," said Floy, as she placed the last pan of milk in the pantry, "I believe I'll run down to father's and do his kitchen work before breakfast, since the mothers are both snoozing yet."

"I think you'll have time," said Grace, who admired the fidelity with which Floy clung to both her homes, and discharged her two home-duties, never failing to help her arrange her time for them.

And, indeed, she needed a set programme, for the

hours of daylight outside of school seemed to have eagle's wings in December's short days.

"Don't wait for me, if I'm late. Buckwheat cakes are best hot; mother thinks so anyway."

Then she started across the meadow, where she had worn quite a path; starting briskly, but falling soon into a slow gait, as with brow knit in perplexing thought, she laid her old plans over again.

"How I am ever to broach the subject, I haven't any idea," she said half-aloud. "Pa is set as yon hill and chilly as an icicle, but it's such a shame for him to turn a cold shoulder to his poor one-armed boy!" and a tear glistened in the light of the newly risen sun. "How can he be so hard-hearted! But I don't believe he will be, when he thinks of it right, and I mean to try once more, if he takes my head off for it! I will have dear old Will treated right, if I can."

Floy had been trying, ever since the sad news of Clay's death, and the loss of Will's arm, to appeal to her father's pity to gain his forgiveness, and bring about the long-wished-for reconciliation. Every evening she had planned just what she should say, but somehow "it wouldn't say," when she looked into her father's stern face. So she put it off until her next coming. But now 'twas full time that kindlier feelings should be aroused, if Will's coming was to be as welcome as she hoped, with some mingled fears.

Of course, her father knew of Will's loss. She had no doubts he must have heard of it in the village store where he traded, or through Harvey's family; but he had never betrayed the knowledge, by look or word.

She found her father preparing his breakfast, and in

answer to her greeting, he gave her a hearty invitation to breakfast with him, as he would "have ham and eggs."

Floy accepted the invitation with alacrity, thinking 'twould be a good time to talk; so she skimmed the sour milk, arranged the crocks of milk on the pantry shelf in the order of their respective ages, just as her mother had always done, then announced herself ready for refreshments, vowing she was ravenously hungry.

Floy's presence and usual buoyant spirits always made that deserted home wear a new face to the lone man, and in quite a jovial mood he sat down with her. She poured the coffee, while he served the plates with his old time "company manners," talking so good-naturedly about school, the weather and their two selves, that Floy saw they were getting farther away every moment from the subject she came to talk about; and with a determination to "have it out" at once and with an unexpressed prayer for its good effect, she "bravely waded in:"

"Will is coming home to-morrow," she said.

A Dakota blizzard on an August afternoon would not have changed the atmosphere more or quicker.

"What's that?" he demanded, in a tone which said: "Don't repeat that."

"Will is coming home to-morrow," she repeated, though looking him now full in the face; for, once fairly into it, her courage came up to meet the occasion, with the same undaunted spirit as the soldiers would march to the cannon's mouth, when once thoroughly enthused.

"Coming back a cripple, father—with one armless

sleeve," she said in a pleading tone, as she saw the hard lines settling about his firm mouth. "Won't that plead for him, father? Won't that open the doors you've shut against him so long?"

"Floy, you've said enough on this forbidden subject."

He tried to speak composedly, though the tremor in an undertone betrayed much agitation. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, child, for you've been a good daughter to me, but it ain't no use to talk about Will and your ma; Will has made his own bed and must lie in it."

"How can you talk so, father? Oh! when I think how happy we all were before the trouble! How strong, well, and jolly Will always was; and now—oh! father can't you forgive a wounded, suffering son? He does not come back as he went away!"

She had left her breakfast, and was now standing at his side stroking his refractory hair; as if by bending it, she might bend the iron will also.

A beautiful picture of sorrowful innocence, with a face an artist might crave for his "Queen Esther;" pale with earnestness; and every nerve tingling. 'Twas a new Floy, and old Mr. Morris admired the force she showed while he repelled her.

"Don't work yourself into a passion over what can't be helped. Am I to blame that my disobedient, disrespectful son got worsted in the fight? He was so anxious to enter the army! He was willing enough to risk everything to join the ranks, 'gainst his own kith and kin, and 'gainst my wish and voice; 'cause he was so headstrong, is no reason I should knuckle!" and the hard look in the eyes that met Floy's pleading

ones, told her that argument was in vain; but she couldn't quite give up yet, though hope was sadly wavering.

"Think, papa, what a hard, cold life you live," she began; but a new idea showed itself in his face.

"Who put you up to this harangue? Has Polly sent you here to get me to knuckle?" he interrupted.

"No, sir," and the young figure was drawn up to its full height and straight as an Indian. "You *know* she didn't. I came because I pitied you; but 'tis no use; you're as set in your opinions as a mountain."

Floy had never talked and looked like this at her father before; and he was much surprised, and not a little hurt; but that no one would ever have suspected from his unmoved exterior.

"I certainly have the same right to stand up for my principles as they for theirs; I believe in them just as firmly. 'Twas ungrateful and headstrong of Will, to go directly 'gainst my wishes. How did he respect my wishes? And your ma, putting more mischief in his head every minute! Then, just for contrariness, she put up that flag on the Fourth, just to see what I'd do! Guess she found out!" This with a stress. almost akin to a chuckle.

Floy's temper was almost to the igniting point, and, not wishing to be impudent, she whistled, with an impatient gesture, picked up her hood and shawl and with a parting thrust that stung to the quick: "No use to try to melt an iceberg," she walked out indignantly.

He watched the proud little figure setting her feet down with such emphasis, until hidden by the orchard

trees, then a look of mingled sadness and resentment settled on his face.

"There! Even Floy turns against me, calls me hard names too. Ah! well, I feared it would come! Of course, she's put up to thinking I'm a brute. It's tough on a young fellow to lose his arm, of course, his right one at that; had he listened to me 'twould never have happened," and he cleared away the unfinished breakfast that had been commenced with such a relish and so pleasantly.

Before Floy got through the orchard, the hot tears came crowding over the swollen lids, and when she reached the fence, she pillowed her head upon the topmost rail and sobbed violently.

"All lost! Every hope of bringing the family together." She had hoped to do so much good, had meant to keep her own temper, at any cost; but she had got downright angry, showed it, and called her father an iceberg. Now, the hardest part of that was that there was so much truth in it; but she didn't care for that now, but that her plan had failed, and that "poor Will" must be treated so cruelly.

"Well, 'tisn't any use to disfigure my face o'er it. 'What can't be cured must be endured,' and I'll do my level best to help Will not feel 'out' about it, but 'tis too bad."

Breakfast was over at the cottage; Gwen was calling for "My Foy, my Foy." The swollen eyes and nose just wouldn't "cool off," and get back to their natural proportions before she reached the cottage, despite her effort to rally an outward resemblance of cheerfulness. She wouldn't have her mother know of the conversa-

tion just passed for anything; and Grace must be spared, too. The pleasure of Will's coming must not be marred by this last outbreak; but she hadn't fairly entered the door and answered Gwen's exclamation of "There's Foy! Morning, my Foy!" when Aunt Polly, looking up from the little stocking she was toeing for Gwen, caught sight of the tear-stained face, which was now smiling, ever so unconcernedly, at Gwen.

"What in the world is the matter, Floy? What has happened, child?" she said— two thoughts crossing her mind at the same time; first, that Aaron was sick, then that he'd abused Floy. Grace and Mrs. Osborne were concerned, of course, and Floy was puzzled what best to say.

"Nothing much; I've just wanted a good cry and so had it out and feel better, but," she added, as she saw Aunt Polly thought that no answer at all, "please don't ask me any more," and there was such a pleading expression on her face that Grace changed the subject at once, while Polly drew her own conclusion, "that time would tell. He wasn't sick, that was sure."

"Now, what's the programme for to-day?" asked Floy as she ate the breakfast Grace had kept warm for her. "Shall I go to school, or is there something for me to do here?"

"I think we're ready for Will now, without any more fixing," said Grace. "Baby Gwen will be decoration enough, and knickknacks too, to her papa. I can think of nothing else but Will and his baby meeting."

"Won't it be fun to see them come together?" said Floy, while in the mind of each, instantly, the event was pictured. "I hope she'll run to meet him and call

"Papa tumin'! Papa tumin'!' like she does for her Grandpa Osborne."

"I'll iron to-day, and to-morrow afternoon we'll put her white embroidered dress on when we go to the train. I think we'll all go, won't we, mothers?" said Grace looking from one to the other, laying again the plans for the meeting.

Floy soon had Gwen upon her lap, teaching her to say "papa's tumin'; my papa's tumin' to-morrow."

"Polly and I are going to finish upholstering Will's easy chair," said Mrs Osborne, getting the ruffle which was to make the bottom-frill she had begun to hem on the previous afternoon.

This chair had a history, so 'twas interesting of itself. It had been given Polly by her mother upon her marriage and had rocked Will to sleep when a wee baby, and later Floy, and all the babies who visited at the farm-house. Now Aunt Polly had made cotton pads for the back and bottom, and it was all to be dressed in red. Grace furnished the covering by bringing out a dark garnet dress, that Will always thought so becoming to Grace Osborne, and which would look well with the dressing-gown she had just completed for him.

Floy was making the slippers that she might have a hand in the comforting outfit.

"I can finish embroidering the slippers to-night, like a top," said Floy, "and they look real well too, now that the stitches are covered up with the trimming; the outside puckers a little, but that will be O. K. when he gets his feet in them. Darling old Will! I can hardly wait for to-morrow's train!" and she flew

into her dish-washing task as if that would hurry time.

"Let's drape a large flag in the sitting-room, o'er the table, like Harry did o'er the dinner table at the house-warming," said Floy with a sudden halt, as the thought struck her. "I'll get one down town this evening. Now I must don my wraps and off to school."

About ten o'clock, Widow Edwards appeared in her black calico dress and enormous black hood.

"No; not much use to take off my things, Grace," she said in answer to Grace's invitation. "I just run up a minute to talk. I know you're all in a flurry and flutter about Will's coming. Don't I wish it was my boy, though I got such a dear, comforting letter from him last night! You knowed he took Will's company, didn't you?" They hadn't heard of it, nor had the proud widow either, until last night, but the town was hearing of it now, fast enough, notwithstanding the widow's dislike for "bragging."

"Well, have you heard of the meeting at the store last night, and the planning to all turn out and give Will a rousin' welcome?"

Something made Grace very choky, and Aunt Polly wiped her spectacles many times on her apron.

"Well, now you don't say! That's clever in them, anyway," Aunt Polly said. This demonstration on the part of the citizens was especially grateful to Aunt Polly, for she loved her children, and had been worrying lest Will would feel bad on account of his father treating him like a stranger.

"Yes, they are going to do it in fine style. Judge Burton and Harrington are at the head of it. You see my Mary was inter the store while they were a-planning

it last night. Judge Burton's family carriage, with four white horses trimmed off with flags, is to bring Will up from the depot; the band is to go in front in the band-wagon, and a hull lot more fuss."

"Will would rather walk up with us than to ride in the Jedge's karrage, I can just tell them, now," said Aunt Polly. "But 'twas mighty good uv 'em to think uv honering my poor crippled boy."

Gwen who had been playing at the window, went out running and crying:

"Boys a tunneren! Boys a tunneren to my house."

"There's Burton's Jimmie now," said the widow.

Jimmie brought a note from his father, asking if the ladies would accept his carriage to go down to meet Will, as the citizens desired to bring him home in fitting way to partly show their esteem and sympathy.

They couldn't do less than to accept, since it was to honor Will; though it seemed a little queer to Grace for them to go down with a "carriage and four," borrowed plumes at that; but 'twas so arranged.

That afternoon when Grace heard the train down the road, the color, rich and blooming, came into her cheeks as she thought, "To-morrow, darling, and 'twill bring you!" Then she pictured again his look of glad surprise at the attentions paid him, and wondered how he would act when he first saw his baby. "Our baby, bless the little darling!" she said aloud, looking proudly at the chubby little figure now toddling down the path to the chicken-house to feed her "tickies," grandma having given her a pan of corn-dough that she might have that "fun," as Gwen called it.

Busy with her ironing, and busier still in keeping

her mind partly on her work, neither Grace nor the mother noticed that the train stopped at the crossing opposite Elm Cottage; they didn't see the broad-shouldered young captain with one empty sleeve and the portly "pill-man," who got off and made rapid strides toward the cottage among the elms. But they came just the same as if the dear women had seen them and been waving for them to hurry.

The young man, though pale and far more excited than when he marched so steadily at the head of his company up Lookout Mountain and lost his arm, outwalked the elder one in spite of his "Don't hurry, Will! Don't heat yourself up!" and passing the stable, would soon have reached the door, had he not spied Gwen feeding the chickens.

All along he had dearly loved the baby, which he had only heard of, but the sight of the little one, surrounded by a flock of fowls, picking the feed out of her hand before she dropped it, caused a thrill of happiness through his whole being.

New feelings took possession of his soul, and he stopped with: "The baby! Oh, my baby!" and stood watching her for a full minute as he thought her too angel-like to be touched by human hands. 'Twas a fine December day and her flannel dress and gingham apron were quite warm enough for her, so her hood was her only wrap. With one fat hand she scattered the dough, while with the other she held the pan. "Come tickie eatin," called the baby voice, and Will could no longer resist the temptation to hold her to his breast. "Baby, darling Baby Gwen!" he called softly, hurrying forward. "Do way man! me feed my

tickies," commanded she, her eyes looking great indignation for such a small body.

" 'Tis your papa, little Gwen—come to your papa, darling baby," and he knelt beside her and covered her chubby face with kisses, as he had so often dreamed he was doing.

"My papa tummin' morrow! I tiss my papa!" and the sweet baby lips touched his cheek. Then he took her and started for "Grace and mother," but ere he had taken many steps the door was thrown open and Grace, with a glad cry of "Will! my darling Will!" bounded out to meet him.

Baby Gwen was quickly put down, that he might put his arm around Grace.

"Once more my darling, oh, my darling Grace! I've dreamed of this a thousand times."

"He's come, mother, he's come!" shouted Grace, but it was useless, for mother Morris was already rushing down to her boy, laughing and crying as only a loving old mother can do, who has worried over and hoped and prayed for an absent son.

"Mother, mother darling!" and he loosened his arm gently from Grace's waist to clasp his old mother. "One at a time, you know, will last longer," he tried to say cheerfully as they all sobbed aloud in pity. Mother Osborne had reached him now, and very tenderly Will kissed her, thinking of her own dear boy whose return she would never greet.

The doctor had lagged behind to see the meeting of Will and his baby, but when Gwen had been put down, then he hastened to get his "pet," who met him half-way with a glad "My dear danpa tummin', my dear danpa!"

Now he came up with the baby in his arms for his share of the greeting. He made a desperate effort to clear his throat and keep his eyes dry, but failed. One of the ladies was especially glad to see him.

"Where is Floy?" asked Will, when they had got him into the house and easy-chair, which still lacked the finishing touch.

"At school; you see we didn't look for you until to-morrow," said Aunt Polly, hovering over the chair.

"I'll go down for Floy," said the doctor, proceeding to execute his statement; "she'd never forgive us if we allowed her to lose an hour of Will," but he had only gone as far as the gate when he saw her coming, pell-mell down the road, her hair undone and flying after and around her.

The conductor had told, at the depot, that he stopped to let Captain Morris and Doctor Osborne off at the crossing, and the news went round like wild-fire that the morrow's welcoming was "busted," as the depot-loungers termed it.

Guy Harrington had been down for the mail and got back to school in time to tell Floy as they went to recitation, and she, stopping neither for permission to leave nor to tell the good news, grabbed Mame Edwards' hood—'twas the first she came to—and ran for home and Will.

The doctor teasingly put out both hands to head her off. He was stooping as she passed, and, so beside herself with joy was she that she kissed him, a wonderful thing for Floy to do—and then ran on crying: "Where is he?" and stopping only with her

arms about his neck and crying out her glad "Will, my darling brother; I've got you at last!"

Will took the smothering hugs like a martyr, then held her off to read the changes:

"My little pet sister Floy, in spite of the big dress."

"My papa, Foy. Papa give the baby appety, Foy. Dood papa!" said Gwen from her perch on her papa's knee, but she objected to the kisses he showered upon her as they crowded the apple away.

"Why didn't you wait till to-morrow and be lionized?" asked Floy; and Grace, with the help of the others, told of the preparations.

"Now that was clever," said the doctor; "there was some sense to plans like that."

"Yes," put in Floy; "but you've come now, so 'tis 'love's labor lost."

Said Will: "I'm glad we avoided the crowd. That was one reason we got off at the crossing; another was, I couldn't wait. I've got just the crowd I want to-night," he went on, looking from one dear face to another. 'Twas a "real feast for his eyes," he said.

What a good comforting supper Aunt Polly and Grace did prepare, while the others visited with Will! —Floy's tongue running like a bell-clapper, in spite of her efforts to let some of the others do part of the talking, and Will play with Gwen. She was finishing the slippers now even if Will did see her do it.

Grace's biscuits, made of cream and butter, tasted delicious to one used to "hard tack," and Aunt Polly's plum-pudding, Will declared, had its old-time taste; he'd "know it at the Metropolitan in New York City."

"Halloo! what's that?" asked Will, later, as they

all sat around the grate eating nuts and apples—Grace resuming her favorite office of picking out kernels for Will and Gwen, while Floy and the doctor cracked them.

"Music, certain. No guerrilla in that! you are being waited upon by the Mapleton Cornet Band, Captain Morris," said Floy with a sweeping courtesy; "they know just how to do the honors in the North."

"Bless the boys!" said Will huskily; "why, what are they playing?" for the band and crowd had now reached the gate, and were playing "Rally round the flag, boys," with a vim that sounded like the genuine article, Will said, when they were acting it out on a grand charge.

"Good, good!" cried the doctor, with tears in his eyes, but with a bright smile spreading o'er his face. "That's a deserved tribute, Will; John Edwards wrote home of you starting that tune once at the nick of time!" and he grasped his left hand in real enthusiasm.

Will was more affected than he allowed them to know. They finished playing at the gate, then surrounded the house and sang "Home, sweet Home" with variations; at least there were various voices, from that of the small boy to the dignified Judge Burton, and variations in time, too; then the cries of "Captain Morris! Captain Morris!" became a clamor. Will came out on the porch with Grace at his side and Baby Gwen on his arm, his lips quivering more now than at sight of the Confederate lines; though now, as then, his gray eyes shone, reflecting the burning passion within, but 'twas a kindlier flame and gave a more welcome light.

Judge Burton, prominent in his "stove-pipe hat," which always had worried Aunt Polly before this time, seeming "stuck up," gave the word for the cheers; and there went up a deafening chorus for Captain Morris, followed by a loud hurrah for Baby Gwen. Will bowed his thanks, and motioned Doctor Osborne, who had stepped out with the crowd and helped with the cheering, to respond for him; but the cries of 'Morris!" "Morris!" "Captain Morris!" rang so urgently, that he gave Baby Gwen to Grace, stepped out and in a clear voice, so well remembered by all, said:

"Members of the band, old friends and neighbors, your kindly welcome touches my tenderest feelings. Home, sweet home, to-night, seems dearer than ever. Its associations, its peace, and the Union which secures this peace, are worth fighting for—worth dying for, if need be. Now three cheers for the red, white and blue—may she ever float over a people loyal and true."

When they had been given, the doctor took his patient in, allowing only a hand-shaking with two or three of the nearest ones, and the crowd, feeling in exuberant spirits after giving vent to some of their pent-up enthusiasm, dispersed, as did the inmates of Elm Cottage, to their bed-rooms.

With the tender delicacy which is fully appreciated, no one referred to the lost limb; but next morning when Will was alone with his baby playing "trot horse" and "pattycake" to her intense delight, suddenly she stopped, and with eyes full of wonder, looked at the empty sleeve:

"Where's my papa's handen? Put your handen in

your tocotan, papa." The picture that greeted Grace's eyes as she came in was too much; Will's sad far away look, and the puzzled, troubled face of little Gwen, was more than she could face, and she beat a hasty retreat to the pantry, where she and Aunt Polly had a good cry over the affecting scene.

The three at Elm Cottage vied with each other in their attentions to Will, who declared 'twas "fine to be sick and petted in such a style."

Two days before Christmas, Floy came bounding in from school and it was evident that something was "up."

"Guess what?" but without giving time for them to "guess what," she cried: "Lois Miller and John Edwards are coming to-morrow."

"John Edwards!" repeated Will; "well, how came that? He must have been wounded and not reported; he has evidently been at the hospital."

"I see now the reason Lois hasn't been home sooner, clear as the nose on your face," decided Aunt Polly; "she's been waiting on him. That'll make a match, mark my words!"

"'Twould make a good one, I think," said Grace, but Floy was there, so they asked: "Any news in regard to whether he was hurt badly or not?"

"Not a word, except a message to Mrs. Edwards, in care of Rev. Miller, which said, 'Will be up on the 24th to spend Christmas; Lois Miller will come too.,

"JOHN EDWARDS."

"I saw the 'gram. Mame and I were at the office. Yes; your father got a letter from Harry." (She might have added, "So did I—a jolly one.") "He's O. K. in

camp. The Osbornes are coming up to spend the evening."

"I must go down to the station to meet John to-morrow," said Will, who had been down town just once since he came home.

"We'll all go down," said Grace, "won't we, mother?"

"Oh, they're planning a big time," said Floy. "Doctor Osborne's at the head of it. I heard him say: 'We'll just give it to him hard; he's been hard on the rebs; and we'll remember Lois too, for a finer, nobler girl never lived.' Prof. Baker, coming up with us school-girls, said: 'Very self-sacrificing, very;' but he looked vexed that her name was linked with John's."

When the train came in, next day, Sarah Edwards stood at the head of a mammoth crowd, which satisfied her completely, for that morning the widow had shed some bitter tears.

"S'posed her boy warn't as good as old Aaron Morris'," she grumbled; "the hull town was on their ear when they heard he was a comin', and now everybody was a pokin' around like nothing was the. matter." Mame let her talk, wearing a sly smile sometimes, knowing the surprise would be all the sweeter.

As the train came round the curve the band struck up, "When Johnnie comes marching home again;" and when it had stopped, the hurrahs which were given would have satisfied the most sanguine; but Mrs. Edwards scarcely heard them, for she had caught the manly form in blue, who came bounding toward her, in her arms, and could only hear his "Mother! mother! Dear little sister Mame!"

Rev. Miller had caught sight of the little figure in

brown, which preceded the blue, on the platform, and with an agility which might have been envied by a school-boy, gathered her in his arms; a sweet-faced lady, with many silver threads visible beneath the neat black bonnet she wore, was close at his side.

"What do they make such a noise over me for?" said Lois laughingly, to Floy and the group of friends that surrounded her; "I haven't been in the ranks. I am no soldier."

"Doing a work just as necessary though, Miss Lois, and, doing it grandly, too—bravely as ever soldier faced his country's foes!" said Will Morris, joining the group with John Edwards, who added with a fervor, which Prof. Baker thought unnecessary, "As every soldier who ever left Ward M will testify."

"How is this, Lieutenant Edwards?" asked Doctor Osborne with a sober face, but a side glance that told the crowd a joke was brewing; "were you wounded *before* you went to the hospital, or *after you reached Ward M?*" The laugh that followed disconcerted John for a moment, but he rallied and faced the cannonade with:

"Both, doctor, and have come home for medical advice; would like a private consultation." None laughed more heartily than the doctor, who said he'd watch the case carefully for awhile. Everybody seemed ready to laugh at anything, but Prof. Baker, who preserved his dignity, and was now telling Lois how glad he was that she had come up in time for the senior-class entertainment at the hall New Year's eve. But he didn't get to say he would call for her, for Floy interrupted him, and Lois gave her a grateful look as she turned to Mrs. Edwards with:

"Take your boy home at once and have him rest; see how excitedly he's shaking hands with that crowd." The suggestion was a good one and the crowd scattered.

Lois took her mother's arm and followed her father, who was elbowing a way for them.

"I am coming for you up to Morris' to-morrow evening, so you just have that dictionary out of the way," said John as they passed him.

"Are you? but I need my dictionary, to interpret your big words," answered Lois with a sly, puzzled look.

"Orders must be obeyed," quoted he.

"Certainly, lieutenant," making a motion to remove her hat.

In two homes in Mapleton the sunny side of the earth seemed to be in full view. "Sally" Edwards was known to turn off more work in the same space of time than any two common women, but that evening, supper wouldn't get ready quick, though everything had been prepared before train-time.

Mame laughed outright to see her mother flying from the kitchen to the best room, coffee-pot in hand, coming back without it, to search the kitchen over for it, declaring, "Mame was too careless for nothing."

But John enjoyed the attentions hugely, stretched out on his mother's best bed, and getting posted on the happenings of the last three years.

At the parsonage, Lois went through everything, saw and petted all the chickens, the cat and the dog,

talking all the while so fast as to be unintelligible; but they knew what she said was all right, and enjoyed her clatter immensely, for the house had seemed so lonely without her.

CHAPTER XVI

SOMETHING HAPPENS

"Hurrah! It snowed last night and is as clear as a crystal now!" cried Floy in great glee, as she peered out of her bedroom window on the morning before New Year's.

"Well, it aint no use raising the neighbors if it did," said Aunt Polly, tucking the covers round her shoulders at the mention of the snow.

"But come now, ma, you must allow me to enthuse a little over the fine prospect for our class-festival. Think what running round—begging cakes and sich, we've done! But 'twill pay now—goody, goody!" and she jerked on both shoes in half the usual time. "Sleighing will be the thing to bring folks from the country, and Guy and Fred went out to four schoolhouses yesterday to announce it."

The propriety of having a festival at this time of suspense and anxiety, had been a question of much moment at the cottage, and indeed throughout the village. The class of '64 were giving it, that the funds raised might defray the expenses of commencement in June. They were ambitious to have everything in good shape, and the cost would be quite an item.

Six girls and three boys they numbered, all hard workers and hard thinkers, and Professor Baker said they were worthy of a commencement which would be

remembered in Mapleton as long as the generation remained.

The school-board thought that suitable exercises were fitting, but did not feel that the tax-money should defray the expeness when the people were seeing such hard times.

The class was sure they could raise the needed funds themselves, and the only question that arose came with a demur from Aunt Polly and some other mothers—"that it wasn't now a suitable time for merry-making when dear ones away from home were exposed to danger and suffering." But objections were overruled when the girls of the class had gone up to the W. S. A. S. meeting and Floy made an appeal for their aid and influence; claiming that, as an organization to help soldiers, they should not discourage soldiers' daughters and sisters in a laudable effort, and then added, with a touching tremor in her voice:

"We feel as deeply as you can the bitterness of this cruel war; we know its dark side and weep as you weep; but don't you all think 'tis best to be as cheery as we can be and not meet trouble half way, so we'll have more nerve to bear it if it does come?"

Mrs. Osborne's sweet, patient face appeared from among the crowd as she finished, and the case was soon won. She said:

"I think Floy is right, ladies. The daughters and sisters of soldiers should be made as happy as possible, and we all need to gain strength in the sunshine. That's Harry's old class; he'd be enthusiastic over commencement, I know, if he was here; he asked about the class in his last letter. I want to help all I can; you may depend upon me, girls."

That settled it, and it had been smooth sailing since; for cakes, pies and chickens had been donated liberally. The class had expected to buy the fruit, but one morning, the doctor called Floy aside, saying:

"Here, mother's sympathies are enlisted to help this class out;" and he gave her five dollars; "you'll have other expenses besides substantials." It looked mighty large to Floy and was a "big lift" as it paid for the fruit and the hall.

Now, even the weather was favorable, and the class was in gleeful spirits. Prof. Baker came to the hall and helped arrange tables, seats, and so on, with a dexterity which surprised the girls, who had considered him too learned for anything so common-place as making tables from lumber and store boxes. Lois dropped in to offer her assistance but it was of no use; for Floy and Mame could have done it all, they were so excited. It was a matter of some moment with the curious, who would be the preferred escort of Lois. The young army officer had evidently been under her care at the hospital, and had been out with her several times since their home-coming together, a thing much in his favor, 'twas generally decided. But Prof. Baker had spent at least one evening at the parsonage, and he had corresponded with her while she was away, for the school-girls vowed they had seen envelopes addressed in her unmistakable handwriting, on the desk, and post-marked St. Louis. He was considered quite a "catch" by the anxious mothers of the village, and many of the young ladies themselves, Miss Roby, the teacher in the 2nd primary—

and a good one—Mrs. Grundy knew would give her eyes for him; and it was whispered that he would be a favored suitor at Judge Burton's, if he chose to follow up the vantage ground gained by once escorting Emma home from a rehearsal.

So, many significant looks were exchanged that night when John Edwards came in with his mother; Mame had come to the hall quite early with Floy.

Aunt Polly, who had talked over the pros and cons of this event at the cottage, whispered to Grace:

"I vow to goodness if there aint John Edwards with his mother! Now if that girl has played off on him for that eddicated poker, I'll tell her she's not as smart as I tuk her to be!"

"Wait; she may come with her father," said Grace, "No,"—for the door opened again and Mr. and Mrs. Miller entered.

"Here, Mrs. Edwards, take this place by my mother," said Will, rising, as John led his mother down the hall to find a comfortable seat; "I want a talk with John, anyway." The two soldiers sauntered off toward the other corner of the hall, meeting old-time friends who shook Will's left hand heartily, while their faces spoke their sympathy for him in his loss. But Will soon returned to Grace and Baby Gwen, who came to him with chubby hands uplifted.

"I want on my papa's lapen," and at once on getting there began searching for "appety in my papa's tocotan."

"Where's John," said Grace; "I thought you wanted to talk so badly."

"You see you're such a powerful magnet I can't stay

away long enough," said Will; but in a sotto voce, added, "John's gone down to the parsonage, I suspect; he gave me the slip anyhow, saying he'd be with me soon; I'm second choice you see. There! just as I thought."

For in came John and Lois, looking her best in a new black alpaca and scarlet ribbons, rivaled in color and brightness by her glossy hair and sparkling eyes. Her hair she wore to-night in two long braids, tied with scarlet ribbons. She was a general favorite with young and old, and as they walked down the hall they were greeted with bows and pleasantries on all sides, and Lieutenant Edwards looked quite proud of her, and glad to be at home again.

"Do you know anything of Prof. Baker?" asked Floy, coming up presently from the culinary end of the hall where she had been making coffee and helping to cut cakes. "Here's a hall full of people waiting for supper, and no Prof. Baker to make the announcements; you whisked him off somewhere. Now if you have had a duel, lieutenant, out with it, and Guy will read the programme," as she detected a concealed something in their faces.

"I saw him early," began Lois.

"There he is now," as she finished, Prof. Baker entered with Miss Roby.

"He called at the parsonage early, and now he comes with Miss Roby! O ho!" laughed Floy, "I understand. Wouldn't she rave if she only knew she was second choice? Happy Roby! 'ignorance is bliss.' Come now, they're going to sing. Now, lieutenant, if you are just as musical as your brass buttons are

ornamental, you might stand by the leading soprano; but you can talk to Will; I see he's staying with Gwen."

The girls went off arm-in-arm while John made his way to Will, and found a comfortable place with him on a temporarily constructed seat, consisting of a board, covered with one of Aunt Polly's thick comforts.

"Well, old fellow, this is pretty fine, isn't it? 'twill make camp life seem tougher than ever for awhile, won't it?" and Will looked from the face just visible above the organ—the face that seemed to him sweeter than even Grace Osborne's had been, to the chubby innocent one of Baby Gwen, sleeping in her buggy beside him.

"You're right. It beats even the camp-fire yarn-spinning, to say nothing of land-surveying all day on foot, with fat meat and hard-tack for refreshments."

"Harry would take this in with a vim, wouldn't he!" for Will, on his furlough, had never enjoyed a real treat without thinking of the boy, alone and far away in the ranks. "This was his old class; he was at the head of it, too!"

"'Twill be a comfort to him when we get back with news straight from home. I mean to be back soon, too, I'm getting restless," said John. "Poor Tip! I came across him soon after he had found Clay, and—well, I've seen anguish, of both mind and body borne manfully, but Harry Osborne was the bravest, manliest heart-broken fellow I ever saw! The doctor is not out to-night?"

"No; he had to drive out ten miles, and mother didn't care to come, anyway. Hello! look there! the

whole McGuire outfit. 'Leetle Pathrick,' that Pat used to talk so much about, is quite a boy. See him nab that apple from the table. Poor little chap! I expect they have a hard time of it and even apples are a luxury."

Floy went to the McGuires as soon as the singing stopped, for she couldn't bear to see them neglected at an entertainment given by the "64's." They did look ill-at-ease, for Kate had succeeded by promise of "goodies" soon, in getting them to be good, and they all sat stiff and rigid, in a straight row, "being good" —they knew no other way. The sight was painful to Floy, who had never seen them at rest before.

"Good evening, Mrs. McGuire. Why are you so quiet, boys? You must run around like the rest of the children and have a good time. Hello, Pat! You're getting to be quite a man," and she slipped some candy into his hand, still red from its recent scouring. "Glad you all came."

"An' now isthn't he a growin' to bate the world! Faith an' ef his father don't come home soon sure he'll niver know him at all, at all!" said Kate, pushing back little Pat's hair proudly. "Yis, an we're ivery one here, all along of that gude Doctor Osborne, the saints presarve him! Ye'es see, Moike was a cryin' to cum all ter wake, but I coldn't guv him niver a cint, 'case I hadn't a cint. But bless yer swate face, an' who should cum and knock this mornin' but Doctor Osborne hisself. An' he guv me money fur all ov us, sed as how Meesh Osborne didn't want to cum but wanted the hull of us to cum. An' he told the boys to ate as long as they could stand. An' its moighty foine ivery thing looks."

"We're glad you all got to come," said Floy. "Now whenever there's room at the tables you bring the children and just have a good time."

In the meanwhile, Guy, as pre-arranged, had come up to Will and John, making his best bow with:

"Gentlemen of the 'Old Reliable,' (Harry had written Gen. T—'s name for Co. F)"the class of '64 takes off its hat to you and asks that you will grace the first table as our guests; your ladies are of course included in the invitation."

"Is this honor intended for ourselves or our coats?" asked Will, signaling Grace, who was coming down from the rostrum.

"The coats," said Guy emphatically. "All honor to the coats of blue, symbol of the cause espoused so true!"

"Ha! who have we here, Cæsar or Cicero?" in mock surprise asked Will.

"Seize her, and come to supper," said Guy as Grace came up. John went for Lois. He found her at the organ talking to Prof. Baker, idly turning the leaves of a music book and so absorbed in the conversation that she didn't notice his approach. He would have waited, had he not caught the professor's eye, which turned again in feigned innocence, and seeing that he meant to ignore his presence and protract the conversation, John abruptly said:

"Miss Lois—excuse the intrusion—if you are ready for supper the class would like us at this table; they have had places reserved I believe." The professor bit his blonde mustache in evident chagrin, but Lois turned quickly.

"No intrusion, I assure you, to announce supper. The offense would have been unpardonable if you hadn't spoken at once. Floy told me I was to be considered a soldier and all of us honored," she said, with a smile Prof. Baker thought uncalled for. "Excuse me, please."

"Another 'soldier' thrust at me," thought Prof. Baker, as he bowed, and they walked off.

The professor was sorely hurt at any reference to soldiers just now, because he was debating in his own mind the pros and cons of enlisting. It was not from cowardice he didn't enter the ranks, at first; but partly because he didn't give the subject much thought, being absorbed in his daily mental routine, and partly because he thought the war wouldn't last long, and his services would not be needed in the field; and then he believed he could serve his country better by teaching boys and girls. But since the news of Clay Osborne's death had come like a thunder-bolt to the village, he had been debating with himself the question of enlisting. He got Miss Roby and joined the "soldier trio," as Floy called Lois and the "blue coats."

As John seated Lois, Floy came quickly with two cups of coffee, ran 'gainst him and spilled one; but he prevented it from getting on him by an agile spring. Floy was much provoked at her blunder, for she wanted Will to see she had improved, and he might laugh at this awkward move, but she said adroitly: "Fie, lieutenant, retreat, and you a soldier?"

"Never," replied John promptly, "Only getting a good foothold for a hand-to-hand contest if that other cup is to be hurled at me."

In the general laugh which followed, Will joined as heartily as any, for Will wasn't one mite ashamed of his little sister.

The table-talk started off with witticisms from Lois and good-natured jests between Will and the waiters as they passed; but it would drift into regrets at the absence of dear ones and the late news of the war. Prof. Baker and Miss Roby sat near the class-guests, and joined in the general conversation.

"Say, John, you'll wait until I can return with you, won't you!" asked Will.

"Well, I don't know; when can you go? I'm about well and might go back any time," said John. "I expect there is room for me."

"I think I'll go by the middle of the month," said Will.

"So soon! No, no," said Grace, a deep shadow settling o'er her face. "I don't think you can be ready in two or three weeks, Will."

"We're needed now, and I must go if I'm O. K., and I shall be," said Will, trying to smile down the troubled look on Grace's face, though to himself even now was coming a dread of the parting. "Here's Lois going at once. She's not loafing round. Can you wait, John?"

"Perhaps so; I'll see about it. I've written that I can return most any time, and wait orders."

"I've written too, but fixed the 16th, to start," said Will glancing at Grace.

"Why, Will Morris! you never mentioned the fact to us," said Grace; "now that's too soon; I had counted on having you six weeks still, at the very least."

"We'll get home all the sooner, and are surer of victory, if we hurry off," said Will. "Can't you stay up until the 16th, too, Lois? Do; then the lieutenant will be sure to do so, and we'll make quite a party."

"O no! I'm needed this minute, and must go day after to-morrow. I don't mind going now, but oh, how I hated to leave my mother the first time!"

'Soldiering seems rather at a premium here, to-night." Miss Roby almost sneered in a low tone to the professor.

"It deserves to be," was the unexpected reply, "with Mr. Morris' armless sleeve and Mr. Edwards' lame shoulder to plead for it."

"Now let's have some music and drive away the blues!" said Lois, as they left the table, but she stopped to smile at the McGuire children, who came eagerly forward to fill vacancies, both in the chairs, and in their little Irish stomachs.

"Unbutton your vests, boys, and fill up clear to your ears." said Will. "Hello, Patrick, you're a fine fat boy; I'll tell your father about you."

"Faith an' I'm obleeged to yer!" said Kate with a sparkle in her eye. "An' the boys can put away enough in their boots for a wake, follerin' yer example." And Kate sat down amid the laugh that followed.

"When you're at leisure, I would like a word with you, Capt. Morris," said the professor, touching Will's arm.

"I'm at leisure now," said Will in some surprise, excusing himself from Grace, who went on with the singers. "Shall we find a quiet corner?"

They withdrew from the crowd, Will wondering what was coming.

"You say, Capt. Morris, you go back the 16th; I've decided to go with you. There! I see you're surprised. You thought I was too big a coward, did you? Well, I suppose I should have gone sooner; but I didn't think much about it; at first, I didn't dream 'twas going to be such a gigantic struggle—of course no one could guess it. But I felt too insignificant to-night when you were talking of entering the field again. That I, an able-bodied man, should stay contentedly at home and let disabled men defend the flag I love, seems too much like shirking. Why can't you stay here, Morris, and take my place in the schools?"

"Well! this is a conglomeration of surprises," said Will when he had recovered somewhat. "You enlist? Good. We need men of your mold and ability. But, I take your place here? Preposterous! No, no! I have espoused the cause of this Union and I'll see her triumph, or fall with her, or for her!"

"Morris, you're a man—a true man!" exclaimed the professor grasping the left hand fraternally.

"I'd like to go in your company; how can I manage it?"

"In the ranks?" Why perhaps you can secure an appointment," said Will, wondering if the professor were not sounding him to learn if he had any influence and would help him secure an officer's place, at once. "I don't know that I have any influence, but anything that I can do for you would be gladly done."

But no, he had misjudged him for, with a quick gesture, he said:

"No, in the ranks is the vacancy I want to fill. Shoulder-straps won are the only ones I'd wear. I'll

leave my resignation here to-morrow morning—run up to Belmont on the early train; file my application with the recruiting officer, and get back on No. 4, in time for the New Year's dinner at Judge Burton's. That's a good program. What's your company—Co. F, of—?"

"7th Iowa," said Will. "There'll be room for you. This class will feel cut up at first. Who do you think can take your place?"

"I wouldn't have this class disappointed for anything else—'tis a noble class! It has been the thought of them that has held me some time. Why, there's a Prof. Hull in Belmont, now, arranging to open a private school; if he could be induced to come, and I'll see if he can; I'd never be missed. But I may be of some use at present—I see Floy looks perplexed. Will see you again—you will be at the Judge's to-morrow?"

Will bowed assent and the professor turned hastily, but came back to say:

"Please don't mention this. It must not get out until my resignation is tendered."

"This man is a noble, whole-souled fellow after all! I had thought him a selfish book-worm. We can never tell what kind of a heart throbs under a broadcloth coat any more than we can tell that under a faded jeans!" Will commented mentally. "He leaves a position here with a cool thousand a year, and is willing to go into the ranks. Could there be some motive back of this?" and intuitively his eyes turned toward Lois Miller, the center of a merry group around the organ. "Could she be the cause of this self-sacrificing mood of the professor? She evidently enjoys John—I

wouldn't have him hurt for all the professors in the world. 'Old Gold-filled' Edwards must have the inside track, by merit."

Grace met him as he went toward the singers

"I was looking for you, truant," she said, taking his arm. "Let's get mother and Gwen and go home. I must not allow you to get tired out to-night or we can't go to Judge Burton's to-morrow. Mother ate with Mrs. Edwards at the same table we did, and has talked herself tired, I know."

"But Floy is as busy as ever and has not had supper yet."

"No, she'll be here until 'swearing-off' time, she says, and Guy will drive up with her. Come, there's another delegation coming after you." And she hurried him toward Aunt Polly and then the cloak-room.

"We shall expect you and your ladies to dinner, without fail," called Judge Burton as they left the hall. And Professor Baker bowed such a friendly good-night that Aunt Polly pulled Will's sleeve the moment the door closed, with:

"What on airth's the matter with the 'school-dad?' he had you cornered a powerful long time." But she could scarcely believe her senses when Will told them the professor was going to enlist.

"It's all along of Lois Miller," vowed she; "mark my words: she's so wrapped up in soldiering, he thinks he'll charge on that side!"

"Flank movement, you think," laughed Will, though he had entertained the same thought.

"I think you misjudge him, mother," said Grace. "Let's give him the benefit of the doubt. He's cold

and reserved seemingly; indeed, during the four months we taught together our acquaintance never reached beyond mere civility. But he has a high sense of honor —his boys and girls love him. Floy and the class will be awfully disappointed if he resigns. He should enlist without any outside motive; he has no family, so he can leave home better than many."

"Here we are!—logic and charity combined. I think you're right, Grace, though I had the same thoughts as mother, at first," said Will; then added, merely to see the effect: "He wants me to take his place in the schools here."

"And will you? oh, Will, if you only would!" and Grace dropped the lines and looked into his eyes with such pleading ones that Will regretted having mentioned the offer; while even Aunt Polly forgot her patriotism enough to say:

"Do it, Will; you could! you've studied everything they've got and—"

"Now, my Grace, and my old army-loving mother, would you have me throw down my musket and run, just when the cry of victory is heard coming? no, I must see the goddess reinstated."

"Of course you're right, Will," said Grace, after a moment's silence; "but the temptation to have you at home quite overcame my patriotism."

"I forgot to remark to you, ladies, that this enlistment is to be kept a secret until Prof. Baker himself announces it," said Will, looking the caress he feign would give the dear girl who so dreaded his going away. "We won't tell Floy until she learns it at the dinner to-morrow."

"Dinner at five o'clock! It's supper, and not all the style in the world can make anything else out of it," said Aunt Polly, "I'll wager they think they're mighty condescendin' to have this big New Year's doin's, and if it warn't for Will I wouldn't set my foot on the place."

CHAPTER XVII

GETTING READY TO RETURN

Aunt Polly forgot all about the condescension next day when Mrs. Burton, as an agreeable hostess, had given her an easy-chair among those of her acquaintances she especially enjoyed; while the judge was telling jokes and beaming upon his guests, of whom there were some forty.

Aunt Polly was now full of pride and pleasure, which this visit could scarcely inspire. She and Mrs. Edwards compared notes upon something which they chatted and nodded happily over, and it wasn't long until the cause of their rapture was known throughout the parlor.

That afternoon's mail had brought a long, important-looking envelope to Will, which proved to be a commission as colonel of the Seventh Iowa. With it a letter from Gen. T— congratulating him upon his speedy recovery and praising his gallantry at Chattanooga. In the same mail, came John Edwards' commission as Captain of Co. F. in his stead!

Prof. Baker was among the last to arrive, and, when it eked out through some questions from Dr. Osborne, that he had enlisted, and a new principal would take his place in the school, many and varied were the comments. The busy buzz through the rooms told its stirring effects! The class of '64 was hurt—deeply hurt.

Floy declared it was no use to try to finish the course with a new professor.

"He may be a walking encyclopedia but he won't do!" she said when Prof. Baker urged the proficiencies of Prof. Hull. "Prof. Baker, we've been awfully bad sometimes and treated you shamefully, but we'll be meek as kittens if you'll stay!"

"Enlisted! Goody!" cried Lois, coming from the library.

"So here's one person who is glad to see me go," said the professor with an attempt at jollity.

"Lois would sacrifice everybody and everything for this cruel war! I love my country; but would rather let the South and it's negroes go, than to lose the noblest and most gallant of our citizens," broke in Emma Burton, petulantly.

"Look out, Emma, or we'll cry treason!" said Floy. "You don't mean half of that! Lois don't spare herself; she doesn't stay in comfort and safety while she's anxious for recruits."

Lois' face had colored and her eyes flashed angry retort, but Emma now saw the mistake in wounding a guest and hastened to make amends.

"That's so, Lois is a martyr, too; that sentiment did sound like a little rebel, didn't it? It's well my father did not hear such traitorous language. But really, I'm narrow-minded enough to wish everybody would not go anyway."

After an elegant dinner, the company divided into groups; music and parlor games, "who am I?" and charades, occupied the young people, while notes upon the latest messages from sons and husbands were compared by the older company.

Lois slipped off to a quiet part of the library to think; though she made a desperate effort to appear absorbed in a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which she took down. She wanted to be alone just a moment, and thought she had slipped off unnoticed, but someone had been watching all the evening to see her alone, and some one whose approach she had not perceived observed that she did not turn a leaf nor look upon the page. 'Twas Prof. Baker, who stood beside her looking at the glossy braids with an expression that made her start when she raised her eyes.

"Oh, I thought I was quite alone," she said.

"No, I could not resist a last word with you, Lois. No, don't be frightened! Every knight wore his lady's colors and did for her sake and the king's his deeds of valor, or met death gallantly; do you know, little girl, when I go into the battle I will carry your pure angel-face with me? I have no mother now, I never had a sister; a proud fashion-serving aunt, in Brooklyn, would scarcely give me a second thought if I were left under the Southern turf. But give me the right to call you my 'fair lady,' and never knight went forth better armed—Lois, darling little Lois—I love you truly, madly—"

"Prof. Baker, don't!" cried Lois, "I never dreamed of your friendship coming to this! Let me be your sister, and I will care for your going and pray for your safe and happy return, but—"

"I don't want a sister now, Lois. There comes a love in the life of every one stronger, higher, holier than even that; 'tis for that I crave. Oh, Lois, am I too late? Is there another from whom these words

would seem more welcome?" and he looked so fiercely passionate, that she resented the look while she pitied him with all her woman's heart.

"Prof. Baker, you have no right to question me like this," she said, rising, "I cannot give you what you ask. Believe me—I think you a good man, worthy the cause you espouse and worthy the life-love of some true woman. But that I cannot give—can never give you—"

The sight of the proud cold man who leaned so heavily against the shelves and now grasped a volume of Hume's General History with trembling hands, brought up the deepest pity she had ever known.

"Forgive me, Prof. Baker," she said pleadingly, "I pity you so; and will always prize you as a friend."

"Never mind. Pardon this show of weakness. I understand—you love another. I should have seen it. Don't pity me; forget me rather!" Then turning proudly, he added: "Shall we return to the parlors?"

She went, in perfect silence, across the hall, wondering how she might be natural in manner.

He never betrayed, by look or word, any more agitation; but joined the game of "who am I?" which Floy challenged them to enter, with a zest that kept Lois wondering if this could be the man who exhibited such passionate agitation in the library.

She laughed merrily too; if he could, with such strength, hide his secret under admirable composure, never by word or look would she betray it; and as the evening went on in merry games and telling jests, Lois in part forgot the sting the interview in the library held, and heartily enjoyed this last evening with old school-

friends, before taking up her work again. But in the hall, as they were all going to their sleighs, she slipped her hand in his, saying:

"Forgive me. I would have spared you this pain if I could!"

A warm clasp and "good night" were the only replies.

Lois took Capt. John Edwards' arm, for he had taken his mother and Mame home earlier, that he might have this last sleigh-ride with her. But since he had seen her so much with, and talking so earnestly to, Prof. Baker, he didn't feel as jolly as he had some times in the past week, when they had driven all alone in the moonlight.

"Confound it! She's a daisy little girl just the same, and I love her, in spite of herself, himself, or myself!" he thought as he tucked the robe snugly round her and persuaded the lively team to take a spirited gait.

"This is fine," said Lois, with sparkling eyes. "Oh, if we were only all at home in peace and safety, what royal times we would have! But to-morrow—to-morrow comes so soon!" This with a feeling of regret she couldn't account for.

"Wait until we go, won't you, Lois? Do! I want your face to be the last I see of home;" then he asked suddenly, as if the question was suggested by the previous thought. "Say, have you anything to do with Prof. Baker's joining the ranks? But don't tell me if you have, Lois?" as she attempted speaking. "Lois, darling, darling Lois, I love you—I have always loved you, and no one shall take you from me! Prof. Baker is more learned than I, and is, I believe, a real

man—but oh, little darling, how could I give you up?"

"I don't see any necessity for your doing so!" and the brown eyes looked up saucily into the passionate ones. But only for a moment when they were hidden against a heavy overcoat. The parsonage gate was reached soon; but the team went on and passed it, and John let them go—these "two old school-mates" had so much to say to each other. It had all happened so abruptly that they laughed over how it came about.

"I had not intended saying anything of this sort until, when the war was over, I had a cozy home for you; then I meant to win you if 'twas possible. But I rather like this way best, darling Lois, my Lois!" he whispered, as he left her at the gate.

Lois left for her work on the next day, having spent an hour of the morning at Elm Cottage and bidden Will good-bye. Her father took her to the depot; her dear, loving mother was left standing weeping in the door, whence she could see the girlish figure entering the car-door.

Both Capt. Edwards and Prof. Baker were in the crowd of depot-loungers, and as she bade him good-bye the professor said:

"Don't give this matter one sad thought, even if I never return. You were not to blame." A big sob prevented any other reply than her tears that fell unchecked.

It cost her the greatest pang she had ever known to say "good-bye!" to the young army officer, who held her hand in both his own for a moment; then suddenly turned away. But as the train moved off, he came back to say:

"I shall stop at the hospital one day; will leave home a day sooner than Morris."

"Oh, good!" and the face brightened perceptibly. "Dr. Ackton will be glad to see you. Be sure to come into **Ward M.**"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GUERRILLA RAID

"Give us your money, sir, without delay, or abide by the consequences," and the speaker held a cocked revolver in the face of the cashier of the Mapleton bank to give emphasis to his words.

As there were two other guerrillas with him and several horsemen in front of the bank, although a revolver and rifle were very close at his elbow, the cashier obeyed.

The long-looked-for and much-talked-of guerrillas were in town! Many plans had been made and much drilling done in order to be ready for such an emergency. Some had even wished "that the guerrillas would come to Mapleton, where the people were neither cowards nor friends to rebel soldiers!" Every man and boy in town had prepared a gun or pistol of some kind, and thought, in case they came, they could entertain them in true warrior style.

Facts are hard things to deal with. So long as the guerrillas wrought their work of depredation elsewhere, Mapleton could indignantly cry out against it and allow it could not be done here; some even cried out, and perhaps allowed themselves to believe "that they did not dare come to Mapleton." The Davis Co. men had been called cowards by some since the guerrillas

had been through there recently and killed several citizens who resisted them. They had taken horses and money wherever they found them; had got to Capt. Bence's house in broad daylight, taken him out a short distance and shot him, yet never had one of their number been killed. But now they had reached Mapleton —what did Mapleton do? Why, allow them to rob the bank and every store in town that was open; eat their breakfast at the hotel and ride off without a shot being fired except by Jack Riley, who got into town just as they were riding out. He fired several shots at them as they galloped away, shooting the cap off of one of them. Will Morris and John Edwards had been gone but a few days; but they were hundreds of miles away by that time.

Someone had remembered Jack Riley, who had come home on a furlough to "get rid of the rebel ague" as it was termed, and gone out after him to ask him what to do.

Jack was in bed, but the word "guerrilla" cured him at once, and hastily dressing, he jerked his gun and started with:

"Why, darn it, shoot 'em! That's the proper thing to do; that's what they're for, to be shot!"

Hannah, pale and excited, begged Jack not to go, saying that "they'd kill him sure if they saw his army-clothes."

"No, don't fret! They won't take time to shoot at me if I go straight to them with or without uniform on; for they are a set of cowards that are afraid to join their regular army. I must have a shot at one of them, for I suppose they're the nearest to a rebel soldier I'll

see in these parts, and I haven't had a shot at one for six weeks."

Jack was the hero of the town after that guerrilla cap was picked up. And if Mame Edwards had felt a little backward in allowing Jack to take her to church on the sabbath evening prior to the "raid," she was proud of it now. At once, upon the departure of the "raiders" the villagers began to congregate on the street-corners and wonder what to do, since none of their previous plans had proved available. They involuntarily turned to Jack for orders, in the pursuit all agreed upon.

"We must get all the horses we can at once, and follow them," said Jack.

"We can't do a thing though, if we'd overtake them," said one of the crowd.

"We could not raise half their number," objected another.

"We can raise twice that number and not half try," said Jack. "I'll be one to go, but must get a horse that can travel."

"You was scared so bad you didn't see the whole gang evidently," said Sam Cline. "There was a hundred of them if there was a man!"

"O pshaw, Cline! you're excited. You got scared at their shadows," said Jack. "Twenty is a big estimate."

"Yanks," as the Confederates dubbed the Union soldiers, ought to guess better than that, and various estimates were given, ranging from seventy-five to two hundred. While they were yet talking, Mike McGuire came up and asked if they were going to drill, and

who those sixteen men were that drove by their house so fast he could hardly count them.

Jack now got some of them out after horses, others after guns, but some still lingered at the council corner, regretting the various circumstances which prevented their going. For instance—Sam Cline had no gun.

"I'm always out of luck," he said, "when Co. F went out, it was full before I knew it."

"Well, it isn't full now, Cline," said Jack, coming up from a reconnoitering trip round town. And he gave Cline a look that was not exactly complimentary, and which served to quench his eloquence for some time.

"There they come back," said some one. "See them coming over the hill?"

It proved to be Dr. Osborne. He wasn't driving fast; that was a matter worthy of notice; for he must have met the guerrillas and would want to know what they had done in the town.

"Hello, Doc! you've been trading horses, haven't you?" said Jack, with such a ringing laugh that some couldn't see its propriety at such a time.

"Well, yes. That isn't the same team I took you down home with, and you see I had to give my cap to boot," said the doctor, pulling back his scarf.

"Here's a cap you can have," said Jack, "if you don't mind having your head close to where a bullet has been," twirling the cap over and over, with his finger through the bullet hole.

"Tnat's the cap my own had to replace," said the doctor, examining the rent. "That looks as if a Northern bullet made as ugly a wound as a Southern one, too. By Jove! that was a close call, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Jack, "if his head had been as big as yours, you'd have had a job of refitting a reb's brains or else he would have been mustered out of service without notice. But say, Doc, you didn't tell us why you traded off Fan. When we left three years ago, Fan was such a pet I supposed you would always keep her. But I can guess how you traded; you gave the cap, Fan, and all the money you had in your pocket, and agreed to petition Lincoln to let the South go, in the bargain, besides having to unhitch and hitch up all by yourself."

"Well, Jack, you're a pretty good guesser; I did give all the money I had in my pocket, but I saved a little just the same;" then the doctor puzzled the crowd by going around in front of the team; taking off the collar from the guerrilla's horse, he shook it vigorously, and out rolled two gold coins.

"You see I had a good idea who it was when I saw them coming, so just took those out of my wallet, went around like I was fixing the collar, and dropped them down that ripped place in the top. They galloped up and demanded my money, but found only six or seven dollars. After a good search they remarked that I did not have much money for the rig I drove, or else the Northern cusses must be about bled out. I was congratulating myself on getting off so well when one of them said: 'Say, old chap, you ought to do more than that for Jeff. Davis! so I guess you had better contribute that gray mare, and don't waste any time or words about it either, but unharness quick!' He emphasized the 'quick' and glanced at the revolver in his belt. I took the hint and moved like a school-boy, but

I handled the collar 'with care.' The fellow swore 'that that hoss wasn't so particular about getting a little dirt on his collar as I was, and I'd better hurry.' I hurried, too, for I was just as anxious for them to go as they were to be gone; and their general appearance helped me to obey orders without much ceremony."

By this time the crowd had begun to arrive with horses and guns; the doctor wrote a note to Dr. Sampson, saddled up his own horse, and soon forty armed men from Mapleton and vicinity were ready for chase. Recruits—"raw recruits" certainly, if compared with the original troop—were gathered all along the way, so that when they had crossed the "Hairy Nation" and reached the Missouri line their number had increased to one hundred and forty.

Jack, as the only representive from the regular army, had been given the best horse in Mapleton and put in command. It would have taken a "Little Phil" Sheridan at Winchester to have surpassed him in appearance as he rode at the head and gave his orders. But the doctor had to explain that it was a southern ague and not fear, which caused his teeth to chatter for about two hours that afternoon.

Night came on, and they had never been in sight of the guerrillas; though they had seen some of their "Indian" work and had been told at several places that they could not be more than a half hour's ride ahead of the pursuers.

The greater part of the night was spent in hunting for the band, but they seemed to have scattered.

Next morning, they got breakfast at Memphis and were arranging to divide and go back in two squads,

when the news came that the guerrillas had been seen that morning about four miles north of that town. They were all in their saddles and facing northward, at once. Before two miles were passed, a crowd of mounted men was discerned, off to the right. The sight of them put new vim in Jack, who ordered a halt, threw his men in line and prepared for an attack or brave defense. The commands were promptly obeyed, though many of the "braves" were now shaking as if Jack's southern ague had been contagious.

They advanced within a quarter of a mile from the gang, which had rode to some hay-ricks in a field hard by, and had quite a fine barricade. Some suggested retreat, or caution, at least, and thought it best not to be "fool-hardy," but wait until the guerrillas should open fire. But Jack rallied then, and, inspired some courage by his own enthusiasm; he had the Stars and Stripes unfurled, telling the flag-bearer to keep close to him, and ordered the company to await the signal for firing. The old flag roused the lagging enthusiasm as it flapped brightly in the morning sunlight, and Jack declared that he felt at home once more; when lo! two men rode out from the hay-ricks with a white flag hoisted on a pole!

"Why, blame the cowards!" said Jack. "Why didn't they make a pretense at fighting, any way? Victory without a struggle is no victory at all. No glory in receiving the surrender of a pack of cowards."

And he galloped away to receive the white flag amid the loud cheers from the little band of "home guards."

The terms of surrender were agreed upon and Jack signaled his men to advance, as did the two men their

party. The Mapleton heroes (?) were on the spot before the others from the hay-ricks had fairly started; for men will rush on to victory, but are slow to move in surrender.

The flag was waved triumphantly as they came slowly down the hill; Jack's blue uniform and brass buttons shone in the sunlight as he stood proudly 'neath the starry banner to receive the nation's enemies, a part of them, at least. When they were but a few yards away he was astounded to hear "Halloo, Bill!" "Why halloo, Jo!" exchanged familiarly by men from among his own recruits and some of the advancing prisoners.

"The Stars and Stripes! Well I'll be blamed if we ain't a set of fools! the idea of a guerrilla commander in blue uniform!" and the leader laughed outright.

The laugh was joined in, by both conquerors and conquered, as the truth came out that each band were loyal citizens searching for the same gang of guerrillas!

The excuses for the "rag on the white pole" were numerous, but received with twinkling eyes and many a cutting jest from the "brave" band; but the best excuse was that they had no valiant soldier from the ranks to lead them. Then they rode back, "but not—not" with a guerrilla.

Mapleton was reached late that night and there was some excited talk indulged in and severe threats made before they reached town. For upon discussing the raid, and comparing notes upon it, it was decided that the night before the guerrilla band entered Mapleton, they must have passed in the immediate vicinity; if so they had been harbored by some one who sympathized with the South, and that one must have been—Aaron Morris!

Every questionable circumstance was brought up, all put together to make up a long chain of evidence against the old farmer; the crowd formed a one-sided judge, jury and witness, all in one, and soon a verdict of "Guilty of harboring and aiding guerrillas," was given 'gainst the senior Morris.

The only question was what the punishment should be and when administered; the general feeling was to go to Morris' that night and have a settlement, at once.

"No," said Jack, whose ague was inviting him to stop. "We must not bother him after dark; that would not be a credit to us; it would be a sneaking guerrilla trick. I'm in favor of waiting on him in the morning, but not to-night."

'Twas finally arranged to meet at the hall at ten, next morning, and they hastened to their homes for the night. Dr. Osborne went home feeling the least bit guilty. He had listened to the hard words and threats 'gainst Aaron Morris, father of his son-in-law, and a man whom he had once respected as a strong-minded good citizen, an exemplary husband and a conscientious brother in the church. He had listened to the threats and curses without raising his voice to stay the tide of anger against the old man.

"We have been rather hard on the old man, 'tis true," he said to himself; "but he should not have excited the anger of the town by keeping murderers and robbers like that about his house. The case is so plain that there can be no mistake. That flag business was enough to demand his quitting the country, had it not been for his loyal son and wife. But now he has done a worse thing than that, if possible; 'twould be a sad

blow on the family though, if any real harm should come to him. Will's eyes filled up and his voice was husky whenever he talked of his father, although the old hard-hearted fellow pretended he never knew his boy had lost a right arm! Will would be dreadfully grieved if the old man would receive harsh treatment; we must do what we can for him. He must be warned not to repeat this thing, but for Will's sake he must not be harmed. And Floy, poor girl, would never get over it if they'd harm a hair of his head. I'll get Rev. Miller to go down to the hall with us to-morrow morning and we'll soften their feelings before they wait upon him."

Thus the doctor soliloquized as he went to his home and put his horse away; then he quickened his movements as he thought of the brown-eyed, patient woman awaiting his coming.

"No one here, eh?" he said upon lighting a lamp and looking into the bed-room; then going back into the sitting-room he found a note which read:

"Pa, come down to Grace's at once. She is quite sick. MOTHER."

The next day, the hall was crowded with men of all ages and occupations but Dr. Osborne was not present nor was Rev. Miller. Rev. Miller had heard nothing of the meeting and the doctor had something on his mind which drove everything else out. 'Twas remarkably strange how many found out about this meeting in so short a time, and stranger still, how many loyal men were there who believed in a decided action being taken that would forever prevent another outburst of "rebelism." Neither the war meeting nor the guerrilla

council had caused such an enthusiastic crowd to assemble. Long and loud were the denunciations of such disloyalty. Sam'l Cline had no excuse to stay away. No; he was there, and gave as his opinion, that "such things should be set down on hard, and, though 'tis not pleasant, we must not shirk duty at a time like this." Jack laughed outright at Sam Cline's bravery; but those who did not know Sam, thought the soldier laughed his approval of the patriotic speech. The excitement increased until, before any definite plans had been laid, the crowd became restless and noisy, began to move around and finally out of the house and up the road toward the Morris' house.

The curtains were drawn at Elm Cottage; so they passed there unnoticed.

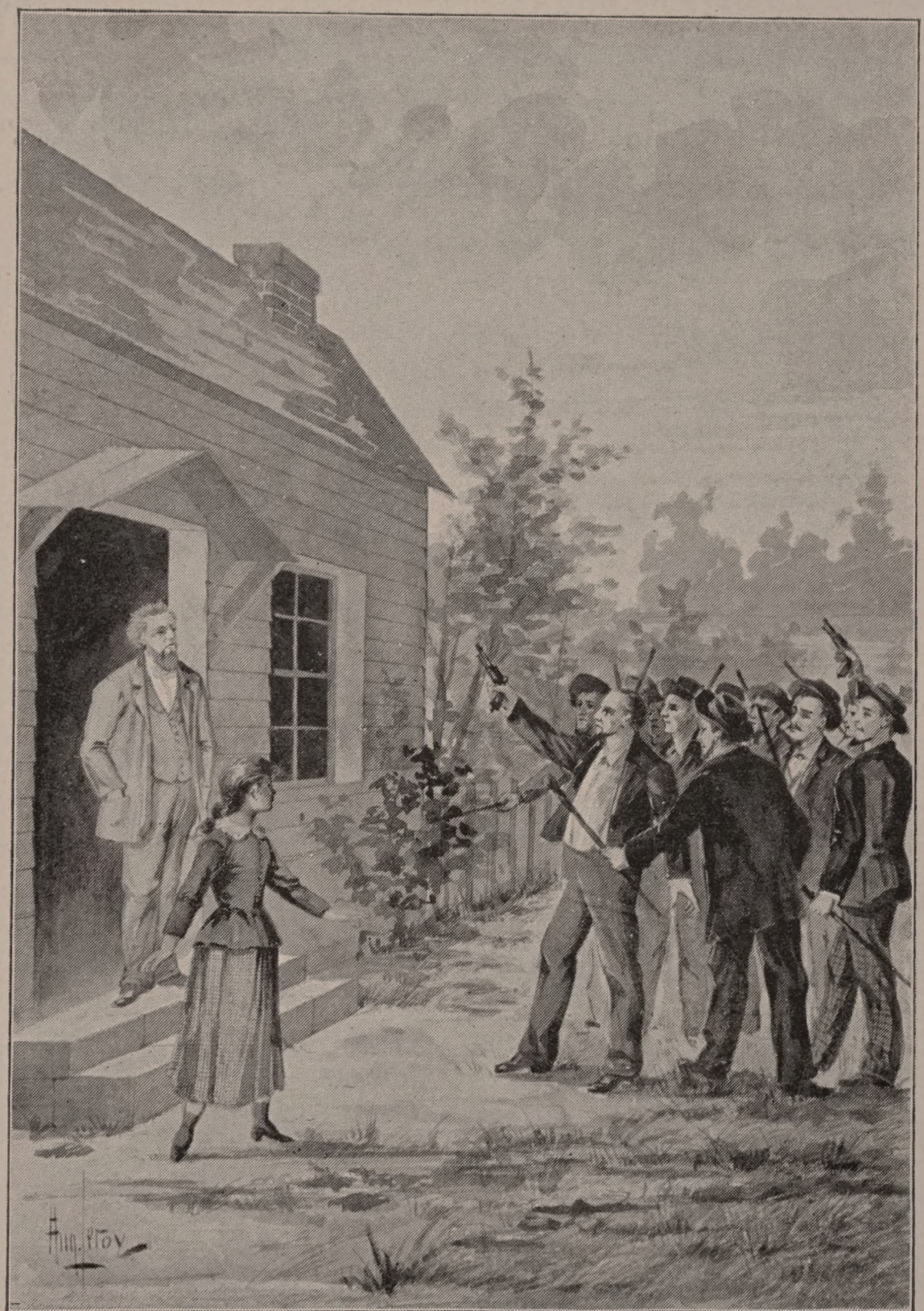
"Now," said Jack as they came to the Morris gate, "we must find out whether they did stay here or not before we do any more; it may be the old chap is innocent, after all."

"Innocent nothing," said Sam'l. "He is as much a rebel as any in the South; of course he kept them, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if there were some there now."

Over the fence and through the gate they hurried to reach the house and the old man. Aaron Morris heard the noise without—saw them, and stepped out on the porch.

"Now, men, what's the matter! what brings you all here?" he asked sternly and quite unmoved.

"Matter enough!" "We'll show you what's the matter." "You know as well as we do," came with various ejaculations from the crowd, and several revolvers



were fired to give emphasis to the words, although it was generally understood that no revolvers were to be taken.

That sound Floy heard at the cottage.

"What can be the matter up at pa's?" said she, rushing in and slamming the door without noticing Aunt Polly's admonition—"Be careful, Florence! Don't tramp so hard."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dr. Osborne, who was bending over poor, sick Grace, "that was very careless of me—I must go down there at once."

But ere he could get his hat and gain the door, Floy was over the fence and speeding across the meadow.

Old man Morris could think of nothing he had been doing to merit such a visit, except not going to see Will when he was at home, wounded; and he drew his already erect form up proudly in resistance to what he thought an outrage.

"I command you to quit my premises, at once," he said sternly in answer to the exclamations that came from the crowd.

"What did you keep here a pack of guerrilla outlaws for?" asked Jack.

"I never kept any; but whose business is it, if I did?" Morris asked defiantly. "This is my own place, earned by hard work; and I'll keep whom I please, and when I please, without consulting a gang of outlaws like you. I wish there were a few guerrillas here now; you would not be so bold."

He had denied it, but the very manner of the denial irritated the crowd to almost frenzy. They didn't believe he spoke the truth, he passed on too quickly;

then he had insinuated they were cowards and called them outlaws.

A hubbub ensued in which could be heard cries of "Shoot him!" "Hang him!" "Make way with him!"

'Twas a grand spectacle, and one that showed how Will's bravery was truly inherited from his father as well as his mother—this white-haired old man facing an excited mob, without any signs of emotion whatever, except his dark looks and tense muscles. Such was the sight that met Floy's eyes as she bounded into the crowd as if she had just sprung from the ground at their feet.

"Back, ruffians, how dare you threaten the father of the one-armed soldier who has only been gone three weeks! You wouldn't have dared do such a thing as this when he was here! You cowards! you're afraid to go to the war, but you're wondrous brave when there's a whole set of your lawless selves, to threaten an old man unarmed! But you shall not touch him! I'll defend him with my life!" and she stepped daringly in front of him, her spirited little body drawn up to its full height, a look of proud scorn flashing from her eyes.

Every man withered before her—silence fell for a full minute.

Finally, Sam'l Cline rallied and asked:

"Are we going to allow this girl to drive us off? Are we going to permit him to harbor guerrillas when he pleases and go unpunished?"

"He never harbored any guerrillas, unless it was you, last fall, when you stole his apples! You are the nearest to one I know of. Why, you'd run from a reb-

el's old coat if you were alone!" Floy flashed indignantly.

The crowd was falling back, feeling a profound respect and admiration for the brave young girl who so daringly confronted them.

Dr. Osborne arrived at this point and told them that the guerrillas had not stayed there; for Floy had been there in the morning when they passed, Aunt Polly had told him so. That was enough, and they walked off feeling and looking decidedly as if "some one had blundered." All turned abruptly but Jack Riley, who came up to Floy to acknowledge "they had been a set of fools."

"I feel like kicking myself all over this place for having any hand in this disgraceful affair," he added. "We ought to have held up, on your account anyhow. You'd ought to be a general, Floy. Forgive me and shake hands, won't you?" he said. Floy did not deign to make a reply of any kind, but turned and went into the house sobbing like a child.

CHAPTER XIX

CLASS OF '64

To Floy this visit was a stunning blow. Will had just turned away from the comforts of Elm Cottage, leaving his old mother weeping in the doorway. Putting his wife's clinging form gently away from him at the station as the bell rang, and hastily kissing Baby Gwen again and again, he had given her into Floy's arms with this last trusting charge:

"Take care of them, darling little sister—God bless you!" Then he had hurried on board to be borne away, as fast as the panting iron steed could bear him, to the aid of the daring men facing death for the tottering Union.

She had wept bitterly at the parting, but her native patriotism had thrilled with girlish pride; she had thought that this sacrifice surely atoned for her father's disloyal principles and even for Hiram's joining the rebels. But when, so soon after Will had gone, her father had been wrongfully accused and almost lynched by those who had once been his friends, Floy's usually buoyant spirits failed to rebound. She loved her father and felt that Will's friends ought not to have been so ready to persecute him.

Then, while the world looked the darkest she had ever known it, Grace lay so pale and in such fevered wildness—caused by brain fever, the doctor said—that

once they thought they must send for Will; or indeed might have to write him the dreadful tidings that would crush every hope from his brave spirit. But God gave her back to bless and cheer them, and the sunshine began to have its old warmth and light.

Floy had been out of school while Grace was sick, keeping Baby Gwen down to the Osborne home as much as possible. When she re-entered school 'twas not with her old-time vim. The class had lost much of its enthusiasm and was drifting along, idly resting on the oars plied with such vigor at the first of the year. Prof. Baker had been its inspiration, and when he had left, the class had felt the shock which every enterprise, every field of business, would have felt with its main-spring withdrawn. Would it rally in time to keep up the fame of Mapleton commencements? Could soldier's daughters, sons and sisters carry off school-honors amid the dread and confusion of the waiting time? Brave sons and daughters they were, and could face hard conditions; but—!

Prof. Hull was a thorough teacher and very scholarly; so, when they all got back again in the classroom, old plans grew as fascinating as ever, and the old-time ambition—to come through with flying colors—awoke.

"If Harry Osborne were here," said Guy one day when the geometry class "went off on a tangent," as Floy expressed it, and discussed "the exercises;" "if Harry were here he'd never fag out. He don't throw down his gun and run without firing, I'll wager! No back down for Harry."

"The old tattered flag he stood by so bravely proves

that, don't it?" said Floy warmly as she drew the figure for demonstration of theorem 39, on the board.

"Or the gold medal you wear so constantly, either!" put in Emma Burton, with a smile at Floy's high color.

If Floy blushed 'twas an extraordinary event, for she usually had an "answer on the end of her tongue," the girls claimed.

"As you'd like to do awfully well, but you can't! And you can't prove this square equal to the sum of those two," Floy said, making the chalk fly.

"Now, say, folks, let's plan some more; just as well arrange for our exercises now as later. Prof. Hull will make it a point to have us finish the brain part in good shape," said Sue Clayton.

"That's what!" said Floy, "and let's be systematic about it and make the time count; we talk at random too much. What selections are made for the final brain effort?"

"Don't say final effort; 'tis just the commencement you know. We'll be heard from in stranger, terser terms than our school-exercises can be," said Guy enthusiastically, for Guy expected to enter college the next year.

"How about the Valedictory and Salutatory?" asked Emma, a little anxiously.

"Speak low, that's the dead line!" said Guy tragically; "think how many classes have gone down in trying to get over that question."

The class of '63 had some hard feelings about the places of honor, and, in previous conversations, the '64's had vowed they would have no honors rather than have a member feel treated unjustly.

"*Justitia fiat, cœlum ruat,*" Fred Hollingsworth wrote on the board. "That's what Harry wrote in Guy's last letter, and said he'd like to hear we took the class record and its standing now, as an examination would show, for the place of honor."

"Of course he knows who would get it then," said Emma, "since he's gone."

"Everybody else knows too; and that very fact shows who it should be," said Guy with brightened color. "But we don't need to discuss the matter, for Prof. Hull is decided enough to assign the places, and let's ask him to do so now, for this is the 5th of April, and we have not too much time if we begin our exercises at once."

At the next recess, the class went in a body to hear the Professor's opinion.

In the meantime, May Clayton had whispered to Emma:

"I think you should have the Valedictory, for you'd dress so nicely and do it so well." Lida Snow agreed with her—for Lida agreed with anybody she was with—and Emma thought perhaps it would be a good plan.

But when Guy told him "we would like to select subjects for our graduating exercises, and would like to know who is to take the honors," the Professor gave a quick glance at the faces, and answered unhesitatingly:

"Why, the class-honors must be awarded to the one winning them. You might have a special examination, but the records for the year point to Miss Floy Morris as ranking first and Guy Harrington as ranking second. Miss Floy would of course be your Valedictorian and Guy would have the Salutatory."

"Perhaps, though, we'd better pass an examination now in all but just the branches still unfinished," said Floy, "and take our grades from it."

"O no, let's leave that until the end of the term and have it all together!" said Mame; "the resul twould be just the same, we all know."

The rest thought so too, and really all knew the work had decided the question, and Floy had won the place.

Month after month, Prof. Baker had read to the school the grades, as the written and the oral examinations, alternating each month, had shown them; and the class had expected Floy Morris to rank 1, as Launcelot had been expected to win the tournament prize. In vain did the Professor tell them "Floy is rank 1 this month, but next month someone else may be."

If the others were inspired to do their best, so was Floy, and the next month showed the same result. But now if every one wasn't satisfied—perfectly satisfied—Floy didn't want the Valedictory; and she would draw cuts for it quite willingly, as she once proposed.

But the question was settled, and settled quite happily in that recess; plans for programmes, decorations, subjects of orations and dress, began to be proposed.

Aunt Polly felt a justifiable pride in Floy, and that night patted her on the head as she used to do when as a "little toddler" she came home with the head-mark. Will wrote her a good big brotherly letter telling her of the new duty the higher place gave her if she would make the rest of the class feel all right.

"Don't put on airs, puss!" he wrote; "he who wins the laurels can afford to be very gracious. The

surest mark of a truly great man is his humility!"

But Aaron Morris was the most pleased of all. Floy was all the old life left him, he thought; and though he knew she believed as did her mother and Will about the war, he knew she loved her father and believed him true and honest in his convictions.

Harvey's children came sometimes to see him and eat apples, and were in a measure a comfort; but Floy clung to him through home-bitterness and public censure; she ran down to cheer his solitude, when Elm Cottage wore its happiest face; she never forgot to do her usual chores for him, even when they were preparing to go to some place of amusement, or were anxious to hear from the son he never went to seek news from.

Floy was his pride, almost the one thing connecting him with life away from his own fireside and himself. While Will was at home she had still come, though never speaking a word about the wounded man; and when he again took his place in the field, only her sad face and slower step told him the bitter pang the good-bye had cost her. He had been unusually kind to her then; for it grieved him to see her sad, he told himself, even if he had no thought for Will.

One day, soon after the preferred places had been arranged, Aaron Morris learned down at the store that his Floy was to have the first place of the class; and it made a thrill of pride wake in his heart he thought 'twas impossible for him to feel again.

"She could beat them all; Judge Burton's girl, Harrington's boy and anyone else in the class; she always could," he chuckled, as he wended his way down the homeward road, and brought from memory's garret a

picture of a tiny little girl in checked gingham pinafore and pink sun-bonnet, running down the path to meet him on an evening, as he came from work—running with a smiling face and sparkling eye, and who, taking his hand, would so often say, "I got the head-mark again, papa!" and in the pleased look, half-shy, half-glad, as he praised her, he thought he caught pure sunshine.

Through the trees he saw a slender little figure coming down the orchard-path, and he touched up old "Kit." "Gee up, Kit," that he might reach the kitchen-porch by the time she did.

"Hallo there, little Valedictorian," he called as she came flitting round the corner, and up to the spring wagon, and he drew up rein in front of the porch, where Tabby lay purring contentedly to welcome her friends.

"Why didn't you tell me you were ahead of the hull lot of 'em?"

"Oh, I supposed you'd know that, it's so much like my father, you know!" and Floy laughed merrily. "You always taught me that self-praise was half scandal; and that good would eke out as well as bad; and here you've heard it already. I expect I would have told you this evening anyhow; for it wouldn't keep much longer. What did you get that is good?" as she took the parcels he handed her.

"Coffee, sugar and crackers, my usual rations. But here"—and he handed her a larger package—"is a new calico dress because you took the prize place, and what's more you shall have the finest dress of the hull lot of 'em when you go to say your piece, the night you get yer sheep-skin!"

"Take care! don't mention dress; for that's a tender subject with us girls just now," and Floy leaned over the porch-railing with knit brow. "Guess it would be a hard matter to out-dress Emma Burton; and I wouldn't want to be silly enough to try, if I could do it, with"—she was going to say—"our boys facing dangers, and people actually suffering for bread at our door," but she knew it would only open the old gash, and what was the use? "Times are too hard," she finished.

He understood, in part, the thought, and counted the fact of her stopping in her say, as obedience to his wish of silence on the war subject.

"You shall do it! I vow it, and Aaron Morris never did try to do a thing that he backed down on! You find out what the finery will cost, and I'll foot the bill, if it takes the farm! Gee up, Kit!"

Floy stood a full minute looking steadily at the old oak which spread its huge branches in a protecting way o'er the porch, and now was putting forth its tiny leaves and buds to greet the coming birds; but other pictures were flitting through Floy's usually practical brain.

"'Twould be a triumph to have a gorgeous dress. Emma has told the Clayton girls she should have white silk or satin with lace-drapery, white kid gloves and boots!

"My! wouldn't it be fine to have an armor like that! One could certainly bring down the house; and 'twould be so nice to keep it for future generations to see, and draw from it visions of the grand graduation it represented!" She soliloquized excitedly: "Emma thinks she'll make up in dress, for not getting to deliver the

Valedictory! well that's all right!" Then a sober look took the place of the sparkling one, and the head so erect was bent to one side thoughtfully, as another point was reached.

"No, I'll not be silly and downright mean too," she said half aloud. "Sue and May Clayton haven't a father here at home, whose work can buy them dresses," and there arose before her mind's eye a vision of a brave soldier tramping along on the "March to the sea" while two little daughters, his pride, far away in their Northern home, were shedding bitter tears, because their dresses looked shabby beside the fine ones. And even Mame, the dearest girl in the world, wouldn't feel good in a plainer dress than I; and she wouldn't have to wear one if John was here, perhaps," she said turning quickly. "No, I'll not do it, I'd feel too mean. Soldiers' girls' tears would take every bit of the starch out of the handsome frock."

Then she flew into the pantry and set the sponge for light-bread, the errand she had come to perform, working the faster to make up for lost time. Then she donned her hat for Elm Cottage. Her father came in, and she told him about her decision.

"I'm just as much obliged to you, my indulgent papa, but I know I'd feel happier and really be better, to dress simply, and as all the girls can. Then no one will feel bad, and we'll finish in unison as we've always worked. Thank you all the same."

The old man was surprised at first, for he thought a girl of sixteen would hardly be equal to making such a sacrifice of dress; but though a little disappointed he was prouder than ever of his little girl, and told her

so in words which made the roses spring into bloom on her cheeks, and she went out laughing:

"Faith an' ye 'ave licked the blarney stone sure! I'm paid now any effort it cost; I didn't care much anyway! Good night!" and away she went, thinking how she'd propose to the girls next day that they should wear plain white swiss-muslin, or something they could all get easily, and put the extra thought on their papers.

Aunt Polly and Grace judged her plan a good one:

"'Twould be cruel to wound one of these girls, at this time above all times," said Aunt Polly. "To have your piece good and say it nice, will be better'n to wear fine toggery. What air you goin' to take for a subject?"

"Well I can't decide, quite; there's too many good ones. The 'class-motto,' I guess, though, will be my theme—'We live to learn—We love to learn'—if Mame don't want it. 'We have crossed the bay and the ocean lies before us,' sounds pretty good; and I've wasted three papers of fly-leaves from my botany upon it."

"My, that is good, I'm sure, Floy! Why not just take that one?" said Grace, "'twould be easy to bring the Valedictory right in connection with it."

"They do seem to blend—school-days the sheltered bay where we learn to sail, and learn, through old 'salts,' as they come in from the great deep ocean, what it holds, the dangers in crossing it, the various streams traversing it," said Floy thinking aloud, "equipments, etc. Well, I'll try an outline of it. The rest of the class are puzzled o'er a subject too, on which

to vent their best thoughts. You see we're so limited in supplies, that only certain topics will fit the thoughts we have! Guy will do splendidly, I know. His topic is, 'Whence came I? whither do I go?' I want Mame to take, 'What shall we do with our girls?' But I must get something jotted down! Here goes on the class-motto," and in the busy hours of thinking, waiting, erasing, and scolding because the ideas would not be connected, all thoughts of the white silk and lace draperies, were obliterated.

Next day it all came back, when, at noon, the girls were grouped in the study, on coming back from dinner. After running over their Latin translations—going off on many a "tangent" in the meanwhile, the old subjects of essays, decorations and dress were reverted to as naturally as ducks turn to the pond.

"What are you all going to wear, girls?" asked Emma. "Pa said last night that if I'd work my very best on school-work, and get up a number-one paper on "Law and matter," I might have any dress I wanted. He said that was of little consequence. He'd like my old gray flannel home-dress quite as well as a new silk." But the toss she gave her blonde head proved his daughter was wiser in worldly lore. "I'll have a royal one if I'm at liberty to choose, and so I told my respected sire!"

"Well, I know we can't have very expensive dresses, though mother said we'd do our utmost pinching to scrape up something pretty," and Sue Clayton tapped the table nervously with her lead pencil. "If father were only at home," she began sadly but the big tears were pressed proudly back. "I don't care, anyway, so we're neat and tastily dressed!"

Floy put her arm round her involuntarily, saying, "You'd look pretty in anything; see these curls," holding up a long brown tress. "Nature has done so much for you; and May's voice, as she sings the class-song, will win her laurels."

Lida Snow and Maud Weir had drawn off to the window and were talking in low tones; Floy knew they were puzzled o'er where their dresses would come from.

"Ma opened her heart last night," said Mame from her perch on the table, "and also the old chest of relics, and brought out her wedding dress, which she said I could make over—and it's pale-blue silk!"

Exclamations of "oh!" and "that would be lovely!" came from the girls.

"Of course it won't compare with Emma's, but 'twill make over nicely, for the goods are not cut up, and scarcely soiled." Then she added with a laugh. "She said she was keeping it for my wedding-dress, but I could have it now, if I wanted it. And I do, for it would be all yellow with age before it served at the altar, if ever I should be so unfortunate as to need a gown for such a purpose." The girls exchanged smiling glances.

"It can serve the double purpose and won't be out of style either, I surmise, if the soldiers come home soon," said Emma. "What are you going to wear, Floy?"

Floy was puzzled; she had meant to talk with Emma alone first, and get her to be willing to dress like the rest, before proposing her plan.

"Well, I hardly know," she began hesitatingly.

"You've thought of something, of course. You look so well in red and black, it's a pity it's summer." Floy thought she detected a little condescension in Emma's tone as she went on: "Our Valedictorian must look nice."

"Don't give yourself any uneasiness about Floy's looking well!" said Mame, a tinge of indignation in the tone, for Mame resented a seeming insult to Floy instantly. "She'll lead the class if she wears her dark calico!" and the queenly figure by the table, drawn up proudly, supposing Emma meant to be patronizing, did show that the Valedictory wouldn't suffer from the person of the Valedictorian, whether clad in muslin or in satin.

For a moment all the good intentions of sparing the other girls vanished; and she thought:

"I'll have the silk dress! Father is willing and I'll outshine Emma if I can!" but Sue gave her hand a squeeze just then, thinking Floy was worried just as she had been; and her better self came to her rescue.

"Girls, we're making a mistake by wasting time and worrying o'er the trivial matter of dress, when our ambition to finish our school-work in good shape, and to have orations profound and pointed—which would be a real honor to us—should engross our principal attention. Let's not fall into the old rut—making commencement exercises a dress parade! But in simple dress let's show the mental part of us to advantage."

"That's what! three cheers for simplicity and good sense," cried Guy as the boys came hurrying in from the base-ball ground.

"Hear! hear!" shouted the other two.

"Now, you boys don't understand this consultation at all, so can take seats in the gallery," said Floy.

"Whence we can applaud or hiss at pleasure?" asked Guy. "We'll judge." "Well, what's up?" "Go ahead."

"Oh, I guess we're through," said Floy; "only, girls, I think we'd look nicer as a class and all feel better, to all dress alike in white Swiss or muslin, each with her own trmimings of course of ribbons and flowers—and the boys in black."

"For a background, I suppose," put in Guy, with feigned indignation.

All eyes were turned on Emma, who didn't try to conceal her disapproval of the plan.

"I'm quite willing," said Mame. "It would be a good plan; nothing is prettier than pure white," (thinking the blue silk would keep, perhaps).

"Well, I'm not willing to do anything of the kind! It's selfish of Floy to ask it," Emma began quickly, "just because she can't have what she'd like is no reason she should ask us all to sacrifice an opportunity to graduate in real style. Everybody knows it's a custom old as the sheepskins themselves, for rich dresses to be worn if they can be secured. Here father has offered to get me a silk dress; shall I refuse it because all can't have one? The whole class don't need to look bankrupt because each member can't afford to dress well! I'll not do it—it's selfish to ask it!"

Emma put on a face full of righteous indignation, and even Mame thought there was reason in what she said. The boys in the gallery neither "applauded" nor "hissed," but watched Floy's face, which was a

study for a few moments; for the charge of selfishness was too much, and Floy's eyes flashed as Emma finished.

"It wasn't selfishness that prompted the proposal. I could have a silk dress too, if I chose to do so!" Questioning eyes greeted this assertion. "My father told me so last night," she quoted. "As nice as any in the class, and nicer too, he said, 'if it took the farm!' So there!"

Applause now came from the boys, and the girls all looked pleased at Emma's discomfiture.

"But really I'd rather wear the simple white muslin; think it would be more becoming in this time of suffering and sorrow, when our own friends are exposed to danger and our neighbors wanting comfortable clothing and food; we don't have to go away from home to find examples of hard times, either. What do you say to this?"

The bell for the senior Latin rang, and the class went to recitation without hearing further; but that evening Emma joined the others, who had agreed to wear white Swiss anyway, and let her take the silk and lace if she choose, with a face which showed that the "angel side" had triumphed.

"I've concluded to be good too, girls; Floy, you were right about this being a poor time to put on airs, and I'll wear white muslin or anything you all say."

"Goody!" "Good!" came in chorus, while Floy said "Bravo! shake!" which was done with a vim. "Emma's heart is all right, and I wanted the silk at first, too."

"You see I'm going to Aunt Hilda's on a visit next

fall, and I thought 'twould be so nice for an evening-dress," said Emma, "but I rather think pa will fix me out in shape then, anyway. He'll be so pleased at my doing what he calls the 'sensible thing' now, that he'll fit me out quite handsomely for the visit to Springfield. So you see I'll make something by giving up," she said smilingly. "I'm not such a goody-goody girl after all, am I?"

The breach was now quite healed, and forgotten in the busy days which followed. Nothing short of a thorough understanding of each subject as shown by a rigid examination would ever satisfy Prof. Hull, and the class being fully aware of it, worked hard.

A long letter from Prof. Baker, full of encouragement, came, giving many incentives to finish grandly a work so well begun. It gave a word to each on his or her exercise. Very precious the words seemed from the faithful teacher, teaching now by precept this lesson in civil government, that true patriotism sometimes demands the sacrifice of individual interests for the welfare of the masses and the perpetuity of the nation. The letter was "to the class of 1864," but after it had been read and re-read, shown to Prof. Hull, and many of the villagers, it was left at Judge Burton's, accidentally of course, and Emma kindly put it in her own private box of relics.

CHAPTER XX

THE COMMENCEMENT

The 5th of June came, with abundance of flowers and sunshine. On the evening of the 4th, the decoration of the hall had been completed. A miniature Eden it looked, in its profusion of floral designs and house-plants, generously lent by all the flower-loving dames of the village. Mrs. Osborne's stately Calla-lily bowed graciously to Mrs. Burton's tuberoses and smiled a warm greeting to the happy-faced pansies that looked up from its pedestal. O'er the center of the rostrum, and extending from side to side, was an arch, bearing in large gold letters the class-motto: "We live to learn—We love to learn," in simple English letters, that the audience might understand it. From its center was suspended a floral horse-shoe; behind the arch were arranged, in a semi-circle, seats for the class, while to the right, seats for the alumni, and on the left, amid the flowers, the speaker was to stand while delivering his oration; almost beneath it, they would stand to receive from Doctor Osborne, still the president of the board, their diplomas; then sing the class-song—"The Old Door-step." May Clayton had been drilled by Grace to sing the solo, and the class would all sing the chorus.

The morning of the commencement day, the 64's were to rehearse at the hall with Prof. Hull, and the

high school adjourned to prepare for the alumni reception in the high school room, as was the custom.

Floy had her Oration and Valedictory well committed; the simple white muslin, pure and spotless as the fair maiden's soul, was all ready; and the plain gold pin her father gave her, white kid gloves and slippers, (the girls had got them out of the class-funds after much discussion) all were laid out on her table.

But one thing worried her, and made her broad brow knit thoughtfully, as she went down the meadow-path and through the orchard, her soft brown hair floating unhindered in the morning breeze, swinging her broad-brimmed hat in her hand. A sweet picture she made that rivaled the brightness of the sparkling blades and leaves, despite the knit brow and preoccupied look. Floy wanted, more than she could tell, for her father to hear the exercises. She had asked him, in her most winning way, to attend, and "just this one time" to go out from his seclusion; but he had sternly refused, saying she could speak her piece for him there.

"I'll ask him once more," she said, as she finished her work in the cave and turned the knob of the kitchen-door where he sat at breakfast.

"Come in, blossom, and take a cup of coffee with me," he said, making room for another plate. "I didn't know you were down yet."

"No; I can't stop, but I want something, and you must grant it, papa," stroking the gray hair fondly as she stood by his side.

"Name it and 'tis yours, to the half of my kingdom." he answered cheerfully.

"Well, I want *you*—I must have you. I want you to

come to-night to hear our papers. Now please, please do! you won't refuse me? I'd rather have it than twenty silk dresses!"

The aged face flushed, and the voice quivered slightly as he answered:

"I can't do that, Floy; I've vowed to never meet these hard, unjust people, whom I once called friends and treated fair and square, again in any way, that they might for a moment think I was courting friendship or cared for their companionship. No: I'll mix in no public gatherings and be treated like I was a snake, just because I stick to my honest principles and don't follow the crowd. Don't cry, child; I'd like to please you," a softened look coming over his wrinkled features at the sight of the girl's troubled face.

"Why live like a hermit, father, and never go to church nor anywhere? why should you care if people with whom you can't agree, treat you coolly? If you feel sure you're right, let them stand aloof if they choose; the world is big enough for all to do and think their own way! If you're in the wrong, if you've any doubt that you are, then, for the love of heaven, get right! You wouldn't enjoy talking with those who differ from you in opinion a bit more than they with you! then why care for them if they only do let you alone?"

Floy was terribly in earnest, and every one of her words spoke volumes of pent-up feelings.

"That's so! if people make me keep my distance, thank heaven! they keep theirs at the same time!" he said, pleased at the thought. "I don't care! what's the odds to me? I'd love to hear you say your piece, and I guess I'll go!"

"Good, good! I'll be perfectly happy then!" and she hurried away, lest he'd put in an "if," looking back from the porch to say: "I don't think I can spare the time to run in again to-day, but I'll look for you at the hall."

And as she darted down the path she didn't hear the husky—"God bless her! I couldn't live without her!" as the old man turned to his lonely meal.

That night, the village people were astonished, and nudges and whisperings all through the crowd plainly expressed the fact, as old Aaron Morris with proud, almost defiant bearing, entered the hall and took a seat near the door; but toward the front, for Aaron Morris "didn't take a back seat;" he was "neither ashamed of himself nor his clothes." Many eyes were involuntarily turned toward the seat where Aunt Polly sat with Mrs. Osborne, Grace, and Gwen. Aunt Polly tried to look unconcerned, and fought hard to quell the tumult within, as she sat for the first time since that memorable 4th of July beneath the same roof as Aaron Morris. He was still her husband, and the tears would hardly stay out of sight as she thought why they were both there—to see their only daughter finish the school-work both had encouraged her to begin —her baby and his! How often in the happy long-ago had they come together to hear her do her part in school-exhibitions; here together they had sat only four years ago and listened to Will's oration, and now —but Aunt Polly choked back her tears. "Folks shouldn't pry into her feelings," she thought, and fumbled in her pocket for a cookey for Gwen, who was waving her little hand in greeting, and calling, "That's

my danpa! Mornin m'y danpa! Gib thatin baby more appety!" But presently the door was thrown wide open, and Prof. Hull ushered in the class of '64 amid applause, leading them down the aisle—the girls in white muslin as agreed, but variously adorned with ribbons and flowers—to their places on the rostrum.

Emma felt dressed after all, for her aunt had sent her a pearl necklace, and pearls for her hair. Floy wore no ribbons nor colors, only the plain gold pin at her throat, but the daintiest cluster of strange white flowers in her belt and another just like them in her hair, "They didn't grow in thi svillage," the girls commented, and 'twas true; but far away on the banks of the Tennessee they had been gathered and arranged by a fair-haired boy in blue, tenderly arranged to bedeck his brown-haired school-mate.

Doctor Osborne had brought up to the cottage the afternoon's mail, a letter from Will and one for Floy—they all knew who wrote it of course—and a curious little box which Floy took to her room to open. There she found the delicate blossoms, fresh and fragrant still, being wrapped in tinfoil, though mailed a full week before. Again and again she kissed them—they were so pretty, you know—and never forgot the giver in appreciating the gift, when during the evening she espied them. When the class marched to their places and stood beneath the arch, they joined with the alumni and the school, seated at the right below the stage, in singing a medley of their own school, comic and home songs, which brought applause from the house.

A string-band of twenty pieces, from Belmont,

furnished the instrumental music for the evening.

Guy stepped out, and in a bright, easy Salutatory, welcomed the audience, nor forgot to tell of the "absent member of the class, gone in the ranks of the brave defenders, at his country's call for men—the man within his boyish form roused to defend the right and succor the cause of the oppressed!"

Long and loud were the shouts of applause at this loving tribute. Then Guy delivered the oration, deep, full of good thoughts, tersely and tellingly expressed —"Whence came I—Whither do I go?"—showing that the God-like soul of man must live and grow through endless ages. And the other orations displayed concentrated thought and were delivered in an easy, fluent style. Even bashful Lida Snow, who had declared she should forget every word of her exercise even if she could utter a sound, soon wore off the first embarrassment and did not break down, after all.

When Floy, from beneath the arch, glanced round at the packed house, her eyes dwelt longest on that lone form near the door; and she bowed to it so markedly that many a kindly thought was given him.

She had chosen for the subject of her oration: "We have crossed the bay; the ocean lies before us!" and she portrayed their hitherto protected school and home-life, as the sheltered, smooth bay, where they had learned a little of the sailing art and been taught from older mariners, who had been out on the wide treasure-hiding ocean, something of its dangers, the currents which are safest and swiftest, and to what goal they led. With her face aglow with hope for a successful voyage, to more than the old man, whose face shone

with hers, she seemed quite equal to launching and facing whate'er danger, or gathering any treasure, found in an unknown sea. Then, as the voice faltered in the last words to "Old friends, teachers and class-mates," the tears came from a sympathetic audience. She also paid a tribute to the member who sailed away on the "war-ship," learning of life in its hardest, saddest phase, but nobly discharging the duty of a patriotic, high-souled man. Her own eye-lashes were wet with tears that did not fall, as she finished with:

"Class-mates, our lives now drift apart. We leave the shelter of this loved school and launch into an untried world; and, never again, perhaps, on the stream of time, may we hail each other. But in the great Hereafter, on the shores of Eternity may we be reunited, to sound together greater depths than mortal e'er dreamed of, and the Master himself be the Captain."

After the "class-song," the class went to the high school reception—Floy stopping to invite her father, as she passed him. He shook his head determinedly, but noticed with pleasure that she carried but one small bouquet, selected from the heap laid at her feet —a bunch of yellow roses which had grown on the old bush by her play-house at the old home. He thought she would recognize them; and that she did so pleased him immensely.

CHAPTER XXI

"OLD YALLER"

"Marse Tip, here's a note from Ginrul T— to yer; he sent me round wif it, cose he's mighty busy, now I tell yer! 'Spect he wants yer to took his place few days, cose I heern him say yer could drive his hoss; but I tells yer now yer got ter be mighty keerful, fur dat dar hoss am jist de old Nick hisself, when de Ginrul hant got 'im." And Darkey Pete, with head thrown back, and thumbs in his vest-pockets, sauntered back singing: "And we'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree."

Harry quickly opened the note, and after reading the few words, put on his cap and started for General T—'s head-quarters.

"Well, general, I received your note, and have come to see in what way I can serve you," said Harry upon entering the office.

"Take a seat, Harry, I'll be through in a minute," said General T—, and went on with his writing.

"I tell yer me and the ginrul is kep mighty busy now; yaas indeed, moighty busy!" said Pete, as he gave a deep breath; "'pears as if Abe Link likes us'ns."

"Now Harry I'll tell you what we want," said General T—, facing about. "We want somebody with the face and form of a woman, but with the heart and

nerve of a David, to go into the camp of the Confederates and find out about how strong they are, and what they are doing. I told Sherman that I thought the 7th Iowa could furnish the very boy. You can have Old Yaller to ride; but don't go if you don't want to, for 'tis a dangerous trip, and, as I said, will require the courage of a David going to meet a Goliath."

"If you say, 'go', I'll try, of course; and if some one has to take the chances why not I as well as anybody else?" said Harry, looking proud at the confidence his general placed in him.

"You'll have to dress as a woman and ride into their camp inquiring for somebody. Old Yaller looks like an old farm-horse, when he's not excited, so he will give them no suspicion; but he's got the speed and endurance to bring you to camp in a hurry, if need be. 'Tis about fifteen miles away, and you're to start about three o'clock in the morning."

Full preparations were made that night, and the next morning at the appointed hour, Harry, accompanied by Col. Morris, was at General T—'s tent ready for duty.

"Whoa! What yer doin', hey? whoa dar now!" bawled out Pete to the horse, as he led him before the tent.

"Old Yaller" had been captured in Kentucky, in the opening of the war; and, though at first sight he would be taken for a very ordinary horse, to the educated horseman's eye he revealed some fine marks rarely seen so well developed in horses outside of the Blue-grass State.

He was rather longer than the majority of thorough-

bred horses of his kind, and wore a different coat; and, though having an officer's outfit on when captured, he had not been looked upon with enough favor to be given a high-sounding name, but was called by the name suggested by his hue—"Yaller." After a hard ride or two, in which he showed his superior "stuff," he had received the honorable appellation of "Old Yaller." General T— soon took a strong liking for the horse, and caressed and petted him a great deal, which favor was appreciated by the knowing horse, and soon taught him to be mischievous and contrary with anyone else than his master. Pete, therefore, had come to consider Old Yaller as vicious and mean, and had done some loud talking to him outside, that Harry might take warning without being cautioned to his fate; but the loud exclamations only made Harry anxious to be upon the horse's back and on his journey.

"Let him go," said Harry, as General T— fitted his foot in the stirrup, and General Sherman let go his hand with: "Young Lord Lochinvar."

"Be thoughtful now, Harry," Will called out, and Pete said: "Pull yer dress up, little old woman, or dat dar ould hoss step on hit sure and sarten."

Old Yaller arched his neck and started off in a high gallop, like Harry had seen him do many times with the general when he held him with a tight rein.

Harry had been up late the night before, getting things in readiness; had tried his dress on, fixed his switch, selected a pair of ladies shoes, and had had no time to think of the danger of the undertaking. He had not even thought of it after he stretched himself out for the night, for when a soldier lays down

he sleeps instead of worrying. But now he had nothing to do except thinking of the stern reality before him.

"What am I but a spy?" said he to himself, "and the rule of war is to hang a spy, the minute his captors get hands on him; but they haven't got hands on me yet, have they, Old Yaller? Of course it would be an honorable death but I would prefer not to die with a rope around my neck. How could mother live if I too should get killed? Poor Clay's death nearly broke her heart, I know; and there's another one too —I wonder if she would weep if I was gone?" and he felt about him to make sure that the locket was still there.

His road lay down a thickly wooded stream, through broad bottoms at times, and then again on high bluffs.

Everything was quiet, save the ever-piping cricket and never-ceasing murmur of the stream. The ripple of the water over the stony riffle, or through the branches of the drift-wood, makes nature's sweetest music to the rambler on a spring afternoon; but to a boy, far from home, in the quiet of the night, and in an enemy's country, 'tis a sound that grates harshly upon the ear.

The bull-frog kept up its continual "croak! croak! croak!" while the owl would occasionally break in with "hoo! hoo! hoohoo!" as if warning him to turn back.

Coming into a clear spot, or upon a knoll, at times, he could see the river spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters below him, like a dark cloud among

the still blacker ones of a storm. The low gusts of wind came chasing one another through the tall trees, causing them to bow their stately heads, or nod first this way, then that, as if in a quandary which to show the most respect to, the tall cliff on one side or bright old Jupiter, as he climbed the eastern horizon, as a herald of the coming day, on the other. The memory of three years of march and battle were dancing through his brain; then again, the thoughts of Clay's death and the face in the locket seemed to haunt him, and cause his heart to throb with the dull sense of dread.

"What's that?" and he drew the rein so tight that Old Yaller not only stopped but backed, to loosen the tension of the bridle. "Ha! 'tis but the grating of one limb against another—'tis the North against the South, the slave power against the anti-slave power. I wonder if God will separate them; or will he permit them to go on wearing on each other until one must fall to the ground? One will die, the other live; but oh, how long will the ugly gash show where they clinched!"

The crowing of a cock in the distance reminded him that he was not in some uninhabited country, and awakened him from his reverie. He roused himself, and his heart beat high again as he recalled General T—'s words: "It requires the courage of a David going to meet a Goliath."

"Come, Old Yaller, you may get the chance to show your metal yet before we get back;" and he patted his arched neck and stroked his long silky mane, while the horse took a long easy gallop, as if he also expected a trial of his speed and endurance, and was husbanding his strength until needed.

Now the deep blue in the east was taking on a tinge of red and gold, and Harry knew that the beauties of night would soon fade away beneath the fierce glances of the big red sun.

On he went, and now he even caroled a few notes of "Brightly beam the morning splendors, up-lift the eye," etc.

A few moments later, he recalled the description, "The everlasting gates of the morning were thrown wide open, and the lord of day, arrayed in glories too serene for the gaze of man, began his state." And Harry, from a high cliff, looked across the waste of green forest and saw the long line of white tents that marked the center of J. E. Johnston's great confederate army.

Again strange feelings came to his head, and he said, loud enough to cause a deer, that had been watching him unnoticed, to throw up its white tail and dart into the depth of the thick forest:

"I wonder if this is a presentiment of harm? But pshaw! why do I let such fancies come into my head, even if I have seen them come true? any signs will come true sometimes." So, carefully brushing the folds out of the long dress and feeling the snake-like coils of hair to see that the wig was in proper place, he gently pulled his horse first one way and then the other, to teach him to obey his orders and that he might have him more thoroughly under his control.

"Old fellow, I guess you are perfectly willing to obey orders; and that is one of the necessary qualifications of a good soldier. Are you hungry? Well, when we get down in the hollow again I'll give you your share of the rations; guess you'll have an appetite

for it, too, after a ride of twelve or thirteen miles; I know I have for mine."

At the foot of the hill he gave his horse his oats; and he ate a few bites of his breakfast, but employed most of his time examining his revolvers and putting them in the best possible positions to be hid from view, but where he could get at them in an instant; then he refitted his clothing, drew a map as nearly correct as he could of the country he had passed over, and was soon in his lady's saddle once more.

Now he pursues his journey as slowly as his horse will go. Once up the long hill, he sees plainly the whole army, and the table-land on the opposite side of the river, and tries to compare it with other armies that he might better judge of its number and strength. Soon he is at the river's edge, and on the opposite bank stands the outer picket-men, one on each side of the road.

Old Yaller walks proudly on, and while Harry permits him to drink, is sharply scrutinized by the picket-men on the opposite bank. The horse drinks a little, but paws the water more, then walks slowly on, stepping high, as if he enjoys the great flakes of spray which he lashes out of the water at each step.

Harry gathered up his skirts in true feminine style; not that he cared for their getting wet, but to play well the part he was acting. He even went to a little trouble to have his horse turn the wrong way, that he might show his shoes and stockings, for in those days it was not an uncommon thing for a dress to cover a man's boots; Jeff Davis himself tried to get into women's clothes afterward, but forgot the shoes.

Harry's scheme was a good one, and, whatever the suspicions had been before, they were entirely obliterated by the striped stockings, which caused a laugh and sly wink from the guards.

"Good morning, madam! What's the object of your early ride?" said one of the men, bowing low in true Southern style.

"Sir, I have two errands: One, to give notice of the whereabouts of a band of Federals who have driven our cattle away, another to see a brother."

"Is your brother in this army?" asked the Southern soldier, more kindly now, as, perhaps, he thought of a sister some place in the "Sunny South."

"Yes," replied the rider, "and he wrote us to come and see him here, as we live but a short distance."

"All right, you pass on and tell about the Yankees and you'll get to see your brother sure."

The same story served to take him through the next picket-line, but from there he was accompanied. A subordinate officer seemed disposed to question him closely, but Harry looked him full in the face so innocently that he was reassured and sent him to the head-quarters of Johnson with a man on each side. Old Yaller behaved admirably well, while Harry chatted freely with the escorts; getting all the information from them he could; avoiding all personalities lest they asked the brother's name, etc. Presently they had reached their destination, where Harry waited patiently for the great Southern leader to come.

What name would he give? if these guards were to stay so close to him, he might get some name from their army roll. A happy thought struck him!—He'd

ask for Hiram Morris, whom he knew paroled. Then he fell to taking notes upon the camp. 'Twas a big busy place; men coming and going in every direction.

"What's wanted, madam?" and turning his head, Harry's eyes met those of the quick-witted General Johnston.

He told his story fast, as he saw by Johnston's nervous manner that he had not long to wait.

"I'll send a man out to whom you shall give the particulars of the raid made by the Federals, and then, by giving the name of your brother, the regiment and company he's in, he will send these men with you to see him."

Then thanking her very kindly, he bowed himself away. Soon two other gentlemen, wearing officers' uniforms, came out. They were talking busily, but Harry noticed that one of them never took his eyes off of the horse, and when within a few steps he said something in a low tone to the other officer; both men now were so deeply interested in the horse that they never even spoke to the rider.

"Come here, Speedwell," said the one; and instantly the horse turned, with ears erect and head up, to greet his old master. In a moment, the thought of where Old Yaller came from, and his having an officer's outfit on when captured, came to Harry's excited brain.

"Then," said Harry afterward, "I saw a rope, home and mother, and, how I ever got my foot over those two saddle horns that looked like mockery, I never could tell." But at any rate he gave Old Yaller a gouge on either side which caused him to stand on

his hind feet, and paw the air for a second, then making several desperate leaps as if to make sure of his freedom to go, he forgot the old master, and obeyed the commands of the new.

"Git there, old boy, git there!" said Harry, turning in his saddle and looking back, as if to see whether the bullets were gaining upon him.

For nearly a mile men came out of tents at almost each leap of the horse; but the sight of a woman, with hair floating out behind, and dress-skirts flapping in the wind, stopped them, and they would stand spell-bound, until he was out of their reach before they would collect their second thought. When fairly started, and after the first shock of excitement, he knew that all depended upon his coolness and self-possession. He had taken a revolver in each hand and as he fairly sailed down the level road, he never even touched the rein, but guided his horse by the swaying of his body from side to side.

The dangerous place was at the river, and Harry determined to do the first shooting there, for of course they would have a good chance at him, as he must go through the river slowly, it being up to the horse's sides. Almost before he knew how far he had gone, he was at the bank of the river. As the horse slowed up, he saw one man draw his gun to his shoulder, but the next moment he had fired his own revolver almost in his face and saw the gun drop and heard a low groan.

He had also fired to the left, and before the flash had gone the other fired and Harry reeled; and but for the double pommel on the woman's saddle would

have fallen. He was now in the river and had balanced himself in the saddle again, despite the ache in his side. Fearing another shot, he turned and fired at the second man, who was still sighting at him, but for some cause no shot was fired until he was nearly across the river. Once across he felt safe, and only allowed his horse to take a long greyhound gallop; saving his strength for a hard pull if pursued. He had slipped one pistol in his pocket, and taking the other in his left hand, he slipped his right round to see what the wound in his side felt like.

"'Tis queer I feel no blood, but 'tis surely a bad wound and almost over my heart. I wonder I didn't drop dead."

He felt no blood nor ugly bullet-hole, though a very sore spot was there. Then taking his hand from inside the clothing, he felt the outside and there was the path of the rebel bullet. He thrust his finger into the place and there he found why he didn't fall a corpse when the shooting took place across the river. Did Providence use the maiden's kind thought to preserve his life? 'Twas the locket and picture which he had worn for more than three years and which he valued so highly.

"'Twas a shame that a picture of that face should be so crushed by a rebel bullet." The locket and picture were bent together not unlike a chestnut-burr.

Harry was so absorbed in examining the "little treasure" that he didn't see the band of horsemen going up on the opposite bank of the river.

Old Yaller had been keeping down to his work in true race-horse style until at the top of the long hill,

where Harry required him to take a slower gait to the bottom where they had eaten their breakfast; then again he took the same easy swing as before. He now has a long even curve, parallel with the river, and feels perfectly safe.

"Not had a sign of pursuer yet," said he to himself, "and I have found out all that was required and have only to ride on back to camp at my leisure, espying out the lay of the country and having a good show of fat cattle for hash."

He found out his mistake about the "leisure" when, the next moment, a band of horsemen were seen three-fourths of the way across the stream, and ahead of him.

The road ran far enough from the river so that he would be safe from the rifles if he could be even with them by the time they came out of the river. From the way they were urging their horses it was evident that they saw him, and were trying to be at the cross-roads first. To turn into the woods without even a cow path would prove fatal; to turn back would probably be to meet another gang; so his only hope lay in his faith in the superiority of Old Yaller.

Almost desperately he struck him with his open hand, as he gathered the reins up tightly with the other. He passed the cross-roads as the hindmost ones came up the bank.

Now the noble horse is straining every muscle. On he speeds, and Harry is so sure of his great power and capability to outdo any of his pursuers that he turns in his saddle, tears the wig from his head, and waves it at the rebs. That so enrages them that they send

up a wild cry as they drive the spurs into their horses sides; and finally when Harry let go the wig it seemed as though they passed it before it fairly touched the ground. Then he tore his dress off, waved it above his head and let go, as he too, gave a loud shout. Harry had never felt a prouder sensation in his life than when he thus lay far over on the dashing steed's neck and patted and talked to him encouragingly. The horse's neck that was usually arched so gracefully seemed now stretched to twice its usual length His iron hoofs made sweet music to Harry's ears as he pounded the solid road, or occasionally hit upon a stone.

"They'll have fleet steeds if they catch me:" and "Who overtakes us now shall claim us for his pains," said Harry.

Still forward the ambitious horse bore him with unflagging energy. Harry praised him freely and knew that his words were not in vain, for once the horse turned his head for the rider to stroke his nose, as General T— would do almost every time he fed him. His eyes gleamed like those of the inveterate racer. His red nostrils were dilated, but his breath came full and regular, and the only signs of fatigue were the flutter of the muscles of his shoulder at times, as though the great strain was telling upon their strength.

"Come Yaller, come old boy! we're over half way now and our pursuers are gradually but certainly falling back."

Their speed has indeed slackened, while Old Yaller has again taken that long swinging pace that the Kentucky thoroughbred horse is noted for on a long chase.

"Ho, boy, ho!" and caps wave and bands strike up a martial air as "Old Yaller and Tip" dart out of a forest into an open field and meet the whole of Sherman's army on the march.

General T— was loud in his praise of both boy and horse, as he patted the foam-flecked steed which shook his head and pawed the ground fiercely, as if anxious to once more hear the sound of his iron-bound hoofs on the race track.

Three days passed by and the rebel general saw his "Speedwell" once more as General T— rode him proudly at the head of the 7th Iowa in the great battle of Resaca.

Hurrah for Old Yaller!

CHAPTER XXII

MISSING AT ROLL

"George Clarkson!" "Here." "William R. Clayton!" "Present." "A. P. Clarkson!"

No answer came for several seconds, then a low solemn voice said: "He fell, in the last charge, and I carried the flag from there on."

"Jimmie Clarkson!"

No voice answered but he was marked present. No; there was no reply when Jimmie's name was called, for that "He fell in the last charge," had been more than he could bear without breaking down and covering his face. They were twin brothers, Jimmie but a few hours the senior of him who had fallen. They had pillowed their heads on the same loving breast. They had slept side by side in the same old-fashioned cradle. They had played the childhood games together. They had started to school together; had graduated in the same class. But what bound them nearer still was, that when their mother had left them at fifteen, she had held them both by the hand and said: "Boys, you are young yet and must need help one another. Go through life together, and both meet me in the good world."

Jimmie had almost forgotten the last words of his mother, but now they came up fresh in his mind; and

the memory of them, with the thought that his constant companion for thirty years had fallen, was a hard blow; and, though a soldier of over three years' experience, he had never truly seen the dark side until now.

He had been in the thickest of the fight, when men fell right and left. Had gone over the field after the smoke and din of battle had cleared away, and seen strong men cry with anguish and pain as they were jolted off to the hospital. He had seen the blue and the gray laying side by side, as they had fallen from each other's bullets or bayonets—but he had never seen the evil of war as he saw it now, and his huge form shook with emotion, as he tried to hide the awful feeling that filled his whole being.

"Here!" "Here!" "Here!" came promptly to each name as the Mapleton boys again reported after the dreadful battle was o'er. Col. Will Morris had ridden up to listen to this part of the roll, and his eyes ran restlessly over the crowd, seeking the owner of the name ere the answer came.

One face he missed, and, searching still, waited the call of the name.

"Harrison Osborne"—a moment's pause, a stir among the crowd as each waited expectantly the clear ringing tones peculiar to the boy favorite; but it never came.

"Tip!" "Harry!"—"Where's Harry?" ran in excited measures through the crowd. Instinctively, all eyes turned to one-armed Col. Morris, whose disappointed, troubled look scrutinized the line of faces, and then rested helplessly with the Mapleton boys, scanning the face of each as if to read there a clue to Harry's whereabouts. The roll-call ceased, aimless questions

were asked, notes were compared upon where each had seen him last; but Harry could not be found.

"He was on my right until just when the firing ceased, I know," said Jack Riley. "The boy must be about somewhere for not a dozen shots were fired afterward. We talked after the battle was clear over, for I remember he said: "It was an easy victory, but we've lost another Mapleton man!" and he told me of seeing Al. Clarkson fall."

"He told me," said Roy Clayton, "that he passed a Confederate boy badly wounded who reminded him so much of Guy Harrington that he was going to take him some water and help him if he could. And after the battle I saw him taking the water back."

That was the last anyone had seen of him, when the battle had been over four hours; the wounded had been all cared for and Harry was not among them. The slain among Union soldiers were all buried but all knew "Tip" was not among the dead.

"I hope he was not killed; and he could not have been killed after the time you boys say you saw him. I don't think there was one prisoner taken. But where he can be is a mystery! He never yet has been absent from roll-call without a cause we all knew of, and I can see no motive for his absence now," said Col. Morris, as he looked anxiously from one soldier to another.

Again and again Co. F went over the entire field in search of a clue to the boy's whereabouts, or something that would show he was killed; for the love they bore Harry, they searched, and also for that esteem they held the one-armed colonel in who rode hither and

thither, a sad despondent look settling o'er his face, usually so full of hope and life.

No trace! no Harry! and all surrendered the hope of ever seeing the boy-soldier again.

They thought no prisoners had been taken, although the Southern papers said: "It was a crushing defeat for our army, both sides losing heavily in slain; but we lost several hundreds, who were taken prisoners, while the prisoners we took did not exceed one hundred."

Never had a sorrow unmanned Will Morris as this did. He had grieved over the death of Clay, so suddenly ending a promising life; but the suspense of this, the conflicting hopes and fears that filled him—brought a wan, hopeless, searching look to his face and a piteous cry to his heart.

How could he ever write the dreadful words to the home-folks? "Missing at roll"—how would he ever dare say that to Mother Osborne, who had already given Clay to the good cause?

He had almost dreaded to meet Mother Osborne after Clay's death; he could see the sad, patient face still, as, with quivering lips, she had said, when she bade him good-bye this last time: "Oh Will, look after my boy: bring back my only boy, my baby!"

What would be the effect of the message he must pen? How would they live through it?—would the bullet that killed Harry pierce the heart of his mother? Would the rebel who aimed at the fair-haired boy in the South, kill the fair-haired old man in the North with the same shot? Over and over Will thought of the message—changed the words that they might seem

softer; then tore the letter up and searched and inquired again.

"Oh what shall I do? How can I tell them?" he asked leaning back from his unwritten page, two days after the sad roll-call. Prof. Baker who sat by him looked his sympathy; during all the search he had been almost as anxious as Will himself.

"Say, Col. Will, an' I'll tell 'em fur ye if ye'll git me one of thim furlo things ye'es goes home on. But faith an' if it's shoost the same to yer I'd rither go home on the kivered keers an' thin I'll know how to git there safe," and Pat's face beamed at the thought that home was possible for him. An' begorra they can git on widout me a toime, an' it's meself as hasn't iver sot my foot toward home sence we all cum."

Will neither replied nor looked up.

"I tell you, Morris, that Harry will turn up yet, some place, I feel sure," said Prof. Baker.

"It does seem that after his lucky adventures he would come out all right," said Will more hopeful again. "And all the boys say that there wasn't a man as young as Harry among the slain."

And he turned to the boys who began dropping into the tent at the mention of Harry's name—turned to them again for hopeful words.

"I know he was not killed," said Roy Clayton. "But I can't tell where in the world he can be."

They had another long earnest talk in which every particle of information they had gained was brought out, and Will felt reassured. At least he thought Harry was alive, though perhaps a prisoner; that would be almost equivalent to death, unless the war would close soon or he be exchanged.

"Well, all I can do is to write home and tell them everything now," said Will; and next morning, when the army-mail was being made up, Col. Will came with his contribution—one letter to Dr. Osborne, one to Grace—to be put in with the thousands of letters going to Northern homes to bring cheer and comfort; or to bring tears and sobs to the dear ones awaiting their coming.

Most of these were freighted with good news—news that Sherman was carrying everything before him; that nothing could resist an army like his; that, in a few more days, they would march triumphantly to Savannah, and soon the rebs must lay down their arms or starve.

The Northern papers said: "Sherman has now surmounted the last obstacle until he reaches Savannah! 'twas an easy victory and not men enough lost to mention, after such battles as Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Cold Harbor and the Wilderness."

Such were most of the letters home; such were most of the comments of the Northern press; but to Will Morris it sounded like mockery to say such things when Harry was gone. Reluctantly, sadly he put in his letters what was so sure to rend the heart-strings of the folks dearest of all others to him. The power of a drop of ink to crush the hope and life out of warm hearts was tested in the drops which penned these tidings, and showed itself in the moans and sobs it wrung from that patient woman, and from the usually so jovial old doctor.

"Oh, why do I live now, with both my boys in the grave! Lone graves—unmarked, unknown, in an en-

emy's country! Oh, why must I give up my baby?" sobbed Mrs. Osborne, when the doctor read the heart-breaking words.

It was indeed a hard blow to both of them, and had it not been that mother must bear it," said the doctor afterward to Grace, "I think I should have gone mad."

"The Lord's ways are above our ways, and though all is dark now let us hope that the light may yet shine upon us," said the doctor, as he pillowed her throbbing head on his sorrow-heaving breast and gently stroked the silvery locks which had so recently been glossy black.

"Why, what have we to live for now?" she asked in a more subdued tone, but sadder still.

"Why, mother, we have much to live for! Let us not forget that the Lord has bound us here by many pleasant ties; and we must not give up those ties nor want to break ourselves loose from them until 'tis good will of Him who has made the greatest sacrifice of all. We have dear patient Grace, who must bear this, too. We have Will, who has made such a sacrifice already; we must take him to be a son indeed, since his father won't. We have darling little Gwen and Baby Grant with their childish innocence and cunning ways; we must throw the doors of our hearts wide open and let them take posssesion in the name of our dear ones gone."

"Oh, my heart is so full of trouble, it seems that there never can one ray of light enter it again." And the sobs came violently.

"I know your heart is full of sorrow," said he, "but if that sorrow must be, let us make it bloom with roses,

for our everlasting crown. Last spring I saw you fill that box with earth; dry ugly soil—and it might have remained so had you not added a few seeds aud kept pouring water on, a little at a time ever since, and now, out of the ugly soil comes a bright living, blooming bouquet. Now your heart is full of trouble; but there is still room for acts of kindness and streams of love which will make a bouquet of good deeds continually springing up for others to pluck from. I really believe from all the circumstances Will relates that Harry lives, and will yet come home to us; but if we must bear this trial also, let's do it bravely and feeling that it must be for the best—"

"What is it Will says?" asked Mrs. Osborne, a hope coming to her face. "He believes Harry still lives unless the soldiers who say they saw him were mistaken?"

"I write you a plain letter giving full particulars from beginning to end," the doctor read, "that you may draw your own conclusions. I believe that the Confederate boy and Harry will yet be found, or will find themselves. He may be wounded and Harry taking care of him some place."

"No, Harrison, Harry would never leave Will and the army to take care of a Confederate soldier. You don't think so either, do you?" asked Mrs. Osborne.

"Well, I don't understand it; but the more I think of it, the surer I feel that Harry is not killed, though he may have been taken prisoner."

A knock at the door brought the doctor away with a regretful feeling, for he feared it was a call for him, which he must refuse.

"Good evening, Judge Burton! will you come in?"

"Well, just for a minute," answered Judge Burton, brushing the snow from his great overcoat which he did not remove. "I hear you are deeply troubled over the absence of your son from the army; and I just came down to say we had a letter in this mail" (he should have said Emma instead of "we") "from Prof. Baker. He gives it as his opinion that Harry was not killed, unless possibly by some stragglers after the real battle was over. He himself saw him just before they took the fort. He also saw the boy Confederate who resembled Guy Harrington, and said he went back afterward, and found some blood where he had been laying —but that was all." The judge then took leave of the sorrowing pair, but met Grace and Aunt Polly at the gate going to help the beloved ones bear the burden.

CHAPTER XXIII

FLOY

"Missing at roll—missing! Oh God, missing!" whispered Floy passionately as she forced her way through the crowd that had gathered round Dr. Osborne in the postoffice as his trembling hand had torn open Will's letter, and he had read the terrible words. Floy heard his heart-broken cry: "O God, my boy is dead!" and with a wild cry in her heart that only God could hear, she hurried away.

There are times when human sympathy seems cold and unavailing; there are trials which must be faced alone. Only the eye of Him who seeth the sparrows when they fall must see in her face what that word "missing" meant to her. Her blanched face and startled eyes brought the tears into the eyes of Mame, who stood with her at the opening of the mail. But when, as Floy turned, she tried to slip her hand through her arm, saying: "Dear Floy, I'm so sorry for you—"Floy had stopped her almost harshly.

"Don't; let me go alone, please." And even Mame could only look lovingly after her young form, that walked so swiftly toward Elm Cottage, quite unheeding the white snow-flakes that blew against her marble-white cheek, all unconscious of the looks of pity given her by the people she passed.

"No, no—it could not be that Harry was dead! God

himself would interfere! What would his mother and Grace do; and I"—and now the hot color surged into her cheeks. "Oh, I didn't know Harry was so much to me!"

She had reached the gate before she realized where she was going; but stopped short, as she clicked it, with, "Grace! How shall I ever tell Grace?"

Grace had been anxiously waiting a letter; she noticed the hesitation at the gate, and fearing sad news, flung the door open; and the look in Floy's face drove every vestige of color from her own.

"What is it? Floy, for the love of heaven speak! Is Will—?"

"No; not Will, but—Harry—is—missing," and the words sounded cold and hard, as she handed Will's letter to Grace.

She had expected one from Harry by this mail, though but a week ago a newsy, bright one had come, full of hope that the war might soon be over; in which he had wondered "if the little school-mate friend, he couldn't coax under the elm to say 'she was sorry he was going to the war,' would be glad to welcome him home, and say so."

"*Harry*! It doesn't seem possible anything could happen to Harry!" murmured Grace, tearing open Will's letter. Aunt Polly, laying Grant in his cradle, stood in the middle door with tears running down her cheeks, and Floy read over Grace's shoulder what Will said—the words that sounded like the first clods of cold earth that fall on a loved one's coffin. The broken sobs caught Gwen's attention, who was "pitty girling" her doll in the catnip tea "danma" had been

giving the "boy baby" ("pitty girl" was the "Baby Gwen's" way of saying "bathe," since Grace would say to her, "come let's wash Gwen's face and be pretty girl).

Now her big eyes filled with wonder as she looked from one troubled face to another.

"I must go to my mother!" said Grace, controlling herself. "'Twill break her heart, if Harry, too, is gone."

"Well, I don't believe he is," said Aunt Polly. "The battle was over, anyhow, before he went to help the rebel boy, and he'll turn up yet. I'm afeerd though, he's taken prisoner."

"*Andersonville!* oh! 'Twould be worse than death, if it were not for the hope of exchange.'"

"You can't take Grant and Gwen, either, out in the snow; leave both with me, Grace. I'll hitch 'Rilla' to the sleigh for you," said Floy, feeling she must do something. "Rilla" was the horse Dr. Osborne got from the guerrilla that traded with him; his own "Fannie," much to his delight, having been returned to him four days later, so he had both, and lent "Rilla" to the folks at Elm Cottage to recompense Floy for the trouble the guerrilla raid had cost her. "Rilla" now stuck her nose round to be petted, but Floy was blind to the mute appeal; for far away o'er a southern field, her thoughts ran to two boys, the one in blue doing a last kind act in pity for the boy in gray, crying for home and mother, in the hour of death.

Would anyone be so inhuman as to kill this noble boy in his act of mercy? or, traitor to the highest feelings of humanity, to send him off to that dreadful An-

dersonville, the very name of which brought terror to the hearts of loyal wives and mothers.

"No, no—I believe Will is right. He must be living, and, if so, will be heard from soon; even now he may be back with the army."

Grace and Aunt Polly were both bundled up and Floy was soon alone with Gwen and Grant, whose fat cheeks Grace kissed tenderly before leaving, saying:

"I won't stay from my boy-baby long—'twill be my first half-hour from you." This "Grant" had come to live at the cottage in September, had been given the name "boy-baby," by Gwen, at once, who in two days would spell b-o-y boy with a vim; but to Will had been left the honor of naming the boy; and when he was one week old, Will had sent the label— "U. S. Grant"—(United States Grant) to Aunt Polly's delight, though 'twould be hard to say who was most pleased with the cognomen—she or Dr. Osborne. Grant was now sleeping at his post (bed-post) and Gwen was given Floy's box of school-day curiosities—shells, pebbles, marbles, etc., which always held her undivided attention. Then Floy took, almost reverently, a box of keepsakes from her trunk, and turning away from Gwen, bedewed the pressed bouquet with bitter tears, kissed the medal on her necklace passionately, but wore it still—repeating the words on the little note she had received with it from Harry: "Wear it till I come."

"But will you come, will you ever come? Oh, you must!" she whispered, "but if not, I'll wear it always —until I come to you!"

Then the packet of letters tied now carefully with a blue ribbon, she took, and read that last one over again. "Would she give him a glad welcome?"

"Oh, Harry, Harry! sleeping perhaps in an unknown grave 'neath the soil bathed in the life-blood of noble patriots like him! No mother to soothe his dying pain —no friend to hear his last 'good-bye!'"

Grace had quite made up her mind when she came back that Harry was dead, and though she didn't say so in words, her face did, and she was trying hard to bow in sweet submission to the will of Him who knoweth what is best. Floy's white face touched her deeply, she guessed that the darling brother was loved by her, too; and the comforting was just the reverse of what Floy had thought while they were gone.

In the evening, Floy went across the meadow as usual to arrange for her father's comfort—and the old man saw in her face the sorrow three words might have told, but couldn't even find out its cause, since he had forbidden all mention of the war; and he felt the barrier between him and his young daughter in trouble more dreadfully than ever.

Two days later, another home in the village was bedecked with stars and stripes and flowers; it was Miller Wells' brick house; the mill was closed that afternoon, the mill-hands given a holiday because *Clarke* was *coming home*—straight home from Andersonville, on exchange! A sad contrast to the Osborne home, with its closed shutters and silent rooms.

Dr. Osborne walked down to the station to meet Clarke—for he might tell something of Harry

A mixed crowd gathered to meet the train, glad that one of the boys was getting home for a season; but what news might the mail bring of those still facing the enemy? Long before the train was due, Miller Wells

and his frail wife came down with beaming faces; and when the train came puffing in, the thin, lank, brown-eyed youth in soldier blue—who seemed all eyes and bones—with a glad cry was caught and hugged in real fatherly style, and never a word of "I told you so! Better have taken my advice and not enlisted!"

"When did you leave Andersonville?" asked the doctor, as soon as the first greetings were over.

"Let's see; this is the 23d of December—well, the 19th," said Clarke. "I lost no time to seek 'God's land' after the exchange was made."

"Did you—you didn't see anything of Harry, did you?"

"Why no—great heavens! The boy wasn't taken prisoner, was he?" and Clarke trembled from head to foot.

"Harry's missing, the letter said—the battle was at Ft. McAllister on the 13th; he would have been in Andersonville by the 19th, anyway, I should think. I fear my boy is dead," and the old man, who turned so sadly and slowly, could scarce be recognized as the fun-loving Dr. Osborne.

"This is terrible!" said Clarke. "It would be 'most as well to be dead, as taken to that horrible place."

The last hope seemed to have vanished as the day brought no tidings from the missing boy.

"He has gone to answer his angel name at the roll-call from the book of life," said Grace softly when her father told them what Clarke had said; and she ended with, "I fear his name will never be answered to roll-call again in this world!"

"Never to face death or danger again. The battle of

life gloriously won. He rests side-by-side with Clay, where peace is I'm thankful Harry and Clay were both Christians; 'twill be a new link in the chain that draws us heavenward. But I can't give up all hope; the boys had both disappeared, Harry and the one he went to help, when Will and the boys searched for them," said the doctor.

Floy, who had driven down with Grace for the mail, heard all with a dead weight on her heart. Gazing steadily into the fire she sat but never saw the flames. Now she looked up more hopeful than since the dreadful "missing at roll" had stolen her roses.

"Let's hope as long as there's a shadow of a chance! Think how many hair-breadth escapes Harry has had!" and she mentally recalled Harry's letter giving an account of his visit to Johnston's camp, where his life had been saved by her locket and picture which was worn next to his heart. It had saved his life! How her cheeks had burned as she read it, and he had added: "Dear little face, which in battle, camp and march had been with me so constantly; it seemed cruel to have it so marred and broken, but bent as it is, not all the wealth of the Confederacy could buy it! It saved my life, Floy, and you sent it to me; so you really saved my life." Her cheeks burned scarlet now—oh, that she might have saved it again!

'Twas late when she went down to her father's that evening, for they talked with Aunt Polly a long time after driving up to the cottage; so Floy drove down, just to say a cheerful word, for the winter was a dreary time to an old man alone. He sat before the fireplace, his head bowed upon his hands. A picture of

abject misery he looked to Floy as she peeped through the window, and a great pity went out from her loving heart to him; for she knew that, hard as he seemed in turning his own son out of the home that had sheltered him since childhood—just because he clung to his own principles even if they crossed the strong ones of the father—he never for a moment dreamed that he *could be wrong.*

A low moan, as she entered noiselessly, brought her to his side in a moment.

"Father, what is the matter? are you sick?" But the flushed face and heavy eyes, as he looked up, answered her before he spoke.

"Not anything serious, I think; don't be scared, girlie," he said, and the face above him paled as he coughed. "My head has been aching all day, and now is 'most bursting, and I have a bad cough too, but I'll be better soon. Your cool hands feel soft and good."

"You have fever, perhaps it is but a bad cold, but—well, I'm going to make you a ginger-stew and give you a hot foot-bath; then you must go right off to a snug, warm bed and I hope that will make you O. K."

This she said cheerily and soon the tea-kettle was humming o'er the fire-place, and Floy was putting "things to rights in the room," but while she tried to wear a cheery face, she carried a heavy heart.

"Oh dear! what shall I do? I can't leave him here alone to-night—he might get worse—I can't stay with the team, and it's dark as can be to come down again. I'll do it though—I must!" and the brave spirit came up strong to meet the emergency.

"Now, father, just bathe your feet," she said, arrang-

ing the foot-bath tub for him and putting the towel beside it, "while I get your bed ready!"

Soon the ginger-tea was drunk and the aching head was restfully settled on the soft pillows. Floy put hot irons to his feet, tucked the covers round carefully, then soothing the hot head, said: "Now I'll take the team back and come again."

"What's that? No, no child, you mustn't come back in the dark and cold!" cried the old man, raising up quickly, but the sharp pain the effort cost him brought a half shriek.

"Yes, I'll stay down here to-night; I'm not at all afraid of the dark; perhaps I'll drive back; there's room in the barn for Rilla, isn't there?" She hadn't meant to say Rilla, fearing it might bring up hard thoughts that the memory of what the guerrilla raid was to him always brought, but the man scarcely heard the name and it held no connection to any scene, pleasant or unpleasant.

"'Taint no use making yourself sick along with me. The old man is cast iron, and will be all right in the morning. Run along back now and don't fret—I tell you 'tis no use; but leave me the bucket of water by my bed."

Floy placed a cup of water on a stand by the bed and picking up the lantern she had brought with her, left the room, hurriedly, without returning the "good-night" he called after her, for she had determined to take care of him.

"Poor lonely old father!" she thought, as she tied up Rilla's halter and jumped into the box-sleigh; "I'll not leave him to be sick, without a human being near,

even if he has been hard on Will, and is in the wrong about the war; I don't care if my nose does get cold, what do I live for anyway?"

Before she had driven far, she could see the cottage door open repeatedly, and knew Aunt Polly was wondering at her long stay.

"What in the world's the matter?" called the well-known voice from the gate, as she drew near and saw the red head-shawl with Aunt Polly's anxious face under it. "You've been gone a powerful long time! I tho't mebbe that critter had run off and broke your neck!"

"Oh no! Rilla and I get along splendidly; but pa is sick and I guess I had better go back and stay all night."

"Sick! What's the matter?" This was the first question Polly Morris had asked for three and a half years concerning old Aaron. But she tried to believe she was simply pitying Floy. "Come in and warm yourself, anyway," she added, leading the way.

"I think it's just a bad cold, perhaps," and Floy felt like bursting into tears as she thought, "The idea of having to explain my father's sickness to my mother!" "But he has high fever and I can't leave him alone!"

The young girl looked truly pitiful with her eyes full of tears that were proudly held back, while a war of conflicting feelings was going on in her heart. The old father down there alone—seeming hard-hearted perhaps, but sick now; and the breach between him and her mother—so kind-hearted and ready to go to care for the sick always—grown wider than ever.

"O! when will this thing end!" But with Will dar-

ing danger after having given his right arm to put down a rebellion which the old man justified to such an extent that Will was disinherited, she couldn't ask her mother to do otherwise than she was doing. But it was hard—so hard—to Floy, who loved them all!

Aunt Polly showed her anxiety by her attentions for Floy, whom she installed in her own easy rocker by the oven; she had her eat a luncheon and drink a cup of coffee, warmed a comforter for her to wrap up in as she got ready to go, and charged her to warm all the bedclothes before she slept in the spare bed unused so long.

Kissing baby Grant, who told her "goo a-goo" (good, good girl, Floy thought he wanted to say) and getting off from Gwen, who ran excitedly around, searching with, "Where's my hooden? I go wiv my Foy!" she was soon out in the dark road with Rilla. Thoughts of Harry missing and father sick crowded all lesser ones of the cold, dark night out of her busy brain.

Her father feigned surprise at her return and said: "'Twas a foolish trick," but the relieved look told her he was glad of it.

Rilla stabled, and her father sleeping, she went into the little bedroom, joining the sitting-room, from where she could hear if her father was not resting well. This was her own little room in the happy home-days; here she had made paper dolls when a wee thing, here slipped off to have the good cries so common to school-girls; in one corner, still, stood a box holding her old school-books and prizes—she had never moved them and still kept some of her dresses on the same hooks where for years she'd hung them. Since that memora-

ble 4th of July she had never used her bed, but had aired it, hoping that peace might come sometime, and they all might return home.

Floy sobbed herself to sleep that night—her first night home again—but so sad was the home-coming! Twice in the night she slipped into the sitting-room to find her father sleeping, though breathing heavily.

"Florence, Florence!"

Floy was dreaming and did not hear her father coughing; but the name brought her to her feet at once.

"What is it? Oh papa!" she cried growing pale at the sight she saw. The gray-haired man sitting up in bed coughing, convulsively, and at every cough came the bright life-blood.

"Hemorrhage," he whispered. Floy knew it must be that, and what to do was the question which puzzled her now. "What if he'd die!" and her marbled face and tear-filled eyes told the fears she tried to hide. She knew she must keep him from getting frightened—that his life depended on it. Floy had scarcely ever seen a sick person, save her mother and sister-in-law that hard winter, and felt almost helpless here alone with her old father who was in actual danger; but she must do something. "Oh if someone would just come!" She gave him a little sugar to keep him from coughing, and made a mustard poultice for his chest—she thought perhaps 'twould draw some of the blood to the surface. Aunt Polly always used lots of mustard.

"Lie down again just as soon as you can," she said, as composedly as possible. "How long have your lungs been bleeding?"

"Just began as I called you. 'Tis stopping now, 'pears to me."

"I think I had better go for doctor Osborne. Now don't talk; I can be back in twenty minutes at the farthest. That's the best thing I know. But you must keep still."

He smiled faintly and pressed the little hands that arranged the pillows, lovingly.

"You're a darling little girl, Florence, a good girl."

When Rilla was bridled, Floy peeped in before starting; how she hated to leave him! He was better though, and kissing the pale brow, she hurried away, calling cheerfully from the door, "I won't be gone long."

"Now Rilla"—as she sprang upon her back and gave a keen cut with the whip—"Go, for the love of heaven, *go!*" and Rilla went, in a way that made Floy think of "Old Yaller" and Harry, though she scarcely expressed the thought to herself. On, on, thinking of, and praying for, that father all alone! Rilla wanted to stop at Elm Cottage and Floy rode to the gate. "I'll tell them," she thought. "It won't take a moment, and may be ma will go down! "Halloo, Halloo!" she shouted; two snowy-capped heads appeared, almost simultaneously, at the kitchen-door; two startled faces, for 'twas in the early dawn and they knew something, and from her face, they feared the worst had happened. Upon the first appearance of the caps, Floy called out:

"Father has hemorrhage—go down—won't one of you? I'm going for the doctor," then down the road she sped.

"I'll go down, at once," said Grace. "Poor Floy!"

Aunt Polly gave her a grateful look and her worried nervous movements became calmer, but Aunt Polly

didn't feel quite easy. "I'll take care of the children then," she said, and helped her off with such alacrity that Grace knew that Aunt Polly's conscience was relieved to have her go. Will also would want her to go, she was sure. Poor old man! she wouldn't harbor sad memories now, but help a suffering man! 'Twas Will's father—nothing on earth could change that fact—that demanded her forgetting all bitterness and working like a daughter. Indeed, he had been so kind to her when she first came here as Will's wife, so thoughtful and courteous to one who felt shy and strange under a calm exterior. All these memories came surging through her mind as she picked her way along the snowy road. She had just reached the porch when Floy came dashing back and passed with, "Good! Grace, I'm glad you came!" Thinking only of the imminent danger to the old man left alone, and with a prayer in her heart that it would not be too late for human help, Grace went in. The old man raised his head feebly with: "Florence, is that you?"

"No, father, 'tis Grace—Floy's coming. What can I do for you?"

She could see the strong man's lips quiver piteously but the vomiting came on again in such frightful quantities that Grace almost fancied she could hear the grim boatman's oars grating upon the sand; and all thoughts of old differences were awed into insignificance before this vision of eternity's nearness.

"I—shall—soon—be beyond—mortal care," he said faintly, as she tenderly helped him back. "And 'tis better so. *Where's Florence?*"

Floy came in just as he spoke her name, and with

blanched face covered his brow with kisses, and Grace stepped to the porch to hurry the doctor whom she heard coming. If Dr. Osborne had any hesitancy about coming, Floy's white face decided him promptly and he had said: "Poor little girl—don't be frightened; I'll come, at once." A gleam of sunshine seemed to penetrate the darkness as the doctor's healthy and health-giving form now came in, and with a feeling of safety Floy heralded him; for the blood still flowed and the old man was very weak.

"Oh, Dr. Osborne, I'm so glad you've come! Now he will get well!" she cried, through her tears.

"I'll do my best, you can count on that," said the doctor, cheerily. Then to the sick man, to whom, though a well-known neighbor, he had not spoken a syllable for over three years:

"Lie perfectly quiet a moment; I'll fix something to help you!"

The hemorrhage ceased, finally, but all day he lay like one dead, and Floy hung like a shadow of light o'er his bed, wondering how much she could bear of sorrow without being crushed. Never had he seemed so dear, this strong old man who wouldn't bend the eighth of an inch in his will if he thought he was right; but *now* so hopelessly broken!

Grace went home to the children, but came and went often during the day, though 'twas a trial to her to meet Harvey's folks, who had been told by the doctor. Floy asked him to do so. They had said many bitter things about Grace and Will in the trouble upon Will's going to the war, and 'twas thought, perhaps unjustly, that they added fuel to the fire that burned out the old home-love.

Dr. Osborne came several times during the day and when Floy looked him searchingly in the eye and asked: "Doctor, will he live? Tell me what you think!" he looked so pityingly at her that she knew the danger, though he said:

"Everything depends upon perfect quiet, and—we'll save him if 'tis possible."

It was the night before Christmas—the saddest Floy had ever known. This evening had always been the herald of a glad to-morrow for her. Christmas-trees and sleigh-rides had filled each evening, and some glad surprise she had in store for the others always lent a special charm to her enjoyment of it. Last year she and Guy had planned a class present to Harry, and sent a cabinet picture of the "class of '64" in a velvet case Floy had made herself. She had baked a handsome cake for her father and could see his happy, surprised look as he uncovered it and read the "Merry Christmas" in pretty candies on the top. Will was here, then, and had stroked her hair lovingly when he saw the cake for her father, saying with *tears* in his eyes: "You're a darling, good girl, puss, I'm proud of you!" But to-night! Oh, Floy thought her heart would burst as she stood at her bedroom window alone for a few minutes, and gazed out into the cold moonlight and thought it all over!

Will in constant danger; Harry dead perhaps, and they might never, in this life, know of his grave; and her father lying so still and helpless, that life seemed suspended with a single thread. But another thought, more resting, came with the last—"God holds one end of the thread." And her wild appeal to Him—she

couldn't see for the darkness she seemed groping in must have been heard, for a trusting, comforting "God knows thy sorrow and will not leave nor forsake thee!" seemed to come to her, and she bravely dried her eyes and went again into the sick-room.

Harvey said he'd stay to-night with the sick father, but Floy stayed, too; keeping silent vigil by his pillow while Harvey snored in the rocker before the hearth. The cough seemed better, the medicine left to keep it loose she was careful to give regularly.

"Another hemorrhage in his weak state might prove fatal," were the words she had heard the doctor say to Harvey on the porch as he was leaving, and they had kept ringing in her ears as she sat thinking, thinking, and yet too worried to think.

She felt so sorry for him in his isolated life. Sadder still became the isolation caused by the tenacity with which he clung to his old set opinions, such a part of him that they couldn't be separated. Never till the issues were dead could the family be reunited; "would that come in this world?" The answer to her thoughts came from the sick man himself, coughing, a stream of blood gushing from his mouth. Floy knew what it meant.

"Harvey! Harvey! Go for the doctor—quick! Harvey! his lungs are bleeding again!" she whispered. "Take Rilla, she's fleetest."

Harvey needed no second bidding, and put Rilla to her utmost speed, but it seemed hours to Floy e'er she heard horses' hoofs returning. Fifteen minutes later, after doing all he knew, the doctor turned, helplessly, to Harvey—he couldn't look at Floy. "Go for your wife, or to Elm Cottage for Grace."

"I'll go!' Floy exclaimed excitedly, tying the doctor's scarf around her head.

"*Polly!*" whispered the pale lips, very faintly, but Floy heard it. "She'll surely come—now!" and with a smothered sob she sprang into the doctor's sleigh and "Prince and Fan" never made better time.

The light in the cottage was still burning, for Aunt Polly somehow couldn't sleep and had been wandering about all night.

Dashing into the kitchen door Floy screamed, rather than called, "Mother, mother, come quick if you want to see father alive!"

Pale as marble, mother and daughter looked into each other's faces!

"Help me get ready—quick!" Aunt Polly said, trying to command her trembling hands.

Grace brought her wraps, and in almost incredible time, Aunt Polly had started back home.

"Send pa for me, Floy," Grace said, putting her arm lovingly around her. "I want to bring the children."

Neither spoke a word on the strange ride home; but there was scarcely time, for Floy drove like mad.

"You go right in," she said as they neared the house, but Harvey came out to tie the team, and Floy followed her at once. That meeting, which she witnessed, burned in the daughter's memory.

"Polly, forgive me—I was hard on you—and—the boy!"

Polly kissed the pale brow. "Never mind, that's all right now!" and her own hands cared for the sufferer afterward, as in the long ago. The cold sweat on his brow, and death-pallor on his cheek, told that the

strong-willed man had found a master, and would succumb.

"I'll never tear down—another—flag, Polly," he said faintly; "I thought I was right, you thought you was."

"It doesn't make any odds now," sobbed Polly. "Don't worry over it, Aaron."

"You was allus a good, kind wife—I oughter respected your feelings," he said, another silence, broken only by Floy's sobs from the foot of the bed where she had thrown herself upon entering.

"Florence! Florence!" he called raising his head excitedly, unheeding Aunt Polly's "don't, Floy's here!"

"Florence, get the deed from my private tin box, you know, in the corner of the bureau-drawer." The head fell helplessly as he saw her turn to do his bidding. When she had brought it he said:

"Now let me see you burn it."

A flush came to Harvey's face, and to that of his wife just entering with their two boys.

"He's out of his head, ain't he?" she whispered loud enough for all to hear.

"No. Only burning up the rubbish," replied the old man. "There! Will will share with you all!" and a happier look settled on the old face than it had worn for years.

Grace and the children came in just then. Aunt Polly held her arms for Grant, and Grace brought Gwen to the bed-side.

"Will's children," Aunt Polly told him; but the eyes had closed. Presently they opened wide. "Tell Will —I cried—when I saw—the—one—arm; I was hard on

the boy—I thought I was right! No quarrels—in—heaven! meet me, where—is Florence?" and the gray head sank back on the pillow smiling faintly as Floy bent over him. A convulsive shudder—dead!

Never a Christmas-morn dawned upon a sadder picture than that made by Floy, sobbing so piteously by her little table. Dr. Osborne stroked her hair tenderly as if she were his own daughter. "Brave little woman, you mustn't give up so. Live for your mother and the little folks!"

"O I'm so sorry for *him!*" she sobbed. "Scarce anybody cares if he is dead, and he was honest in his principles as any of us.'

"That's so, Floy. And now more excuses can be seen. I'm going down town now—what arrangements shall I make?"

"Will you ask Rev. Miller to have a short service here, please? Harvey and ma thinks the funeral will have to be this evening. Harvey said he'd get the clothes."

The news of the death of Aaron Morris, who had been familiarly dubbed "Rebel Morris," "Old Southerner," etc., during these years of strain upon the public mind, went like wild-fire through the village, and more kindly words were spoken in twelve hours of that Christmas-day, than had been said concerning him for the last four years.

"He was honest," nobody ever doubted that; "he acknowledged he was hard on Will," that counted more than anything else in his favor. "He was always good to Floy whom he loved dearly"—These kind truths came out at last. And many sleds and sleighs drove

down to the house that evening to go with Floy—everybody felt Floy was the principal mourner—to lay her old father in his last resting place.

A few impressive words from Rev. Miller, whose ill-health this year kept him from an active charge, and who had always visited the lone man.

In terse, clear terms, he made excuse for him. "You can't transplant an old tree, and 'tis just as hard to change an old man's opinions, when rooted firmly by principles and early training."

Floy's white face and suppressed sobs touched the tender chords in the hearts of the people. But their looks of pity and tender words were almost resented by Floy, for no kind word, no excuse had been given him, in his cold isolated life. The sad rites were over; the people dried their tears, and life ran on merrily as before, but Floy did not forget. Aunt Polly wept tenderly, now, o'er the husband with whom for twenty years she had been happy, and thanked God that in the great hereafter, no mistakes, no misunderstandings can enter.

"What have I to live for, now?" The sad, dejected heart revealed in the tear-stained face raised toward Grace's, as the young mother slipped her arm around her sympathetically. brought the tears into the violet eyes.

"Live for those who love you!" quoted Grace. "Now so many hearts are sad and bleeding from the wounds made in the South. Floy must help and cheer us all." And in the dreary days that followed that sad, sad, Christmas, Floy tried smiling for her loved ones, but oh, the many nights she wept "when only God was near."

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME-COMING

The winter-snow gave place to spring-rains, the wrens came back and sought the old nests under the eaves or in the barn; still the war continued in all its fierceness.

But the great forces were drawing to a focus; the climax must soon be reached; the shout of victory would soon be borne to the ears of the weary watchers of the home-guard. "On to Richmond" was no longer the Northern cry; for Grant had been there, and gone again, to receive at Appomatox, the surrender of the chivalrous Lee and his veterans; this was followed closely by the surrender of Johnston's whole army to the "Old war horse," Sherman, whose gallant forces had split the Southern Confederacy in its celebrated march from Atlanta to the sea.

An electric thrill of joy was sent through every Northern heart, as the news sped through the country on the tingling wires. The glad shout of victory which went heavenward mingled the loud cheering voices of patriotic men with the hysterical half-laugh, half-cry of wives and mothers, and the glad "papa's coming home now" of babies.

The war was over. The Stars and Stripes—symbol of national grandeur and home-comfort, unsurpassed in history—flapped proudly over the North and the

South. Then the surviving soldiers—men who had closed the ranks when their comrades had been mowed down like grass, had braved and survived the terrible fire at Vicksburg and Shiloh—then these gallant braves and true patriots marched in grand review through the streets of Washington and were disbanded. Uncle Sam shook his fat sides, (if he was "financially busted") as the boys in blue boarded the first train and turned their anxiously flushed faces homeward.

Anxious tear-stained faces were transformed as if by magic into beaming happy ones; steps of infirm mothers and fathers took on the elasticity of youth; frail wives grew rosy as the lightning-winged messenger sped through the North, saying: "The army—its mission gloriously performed—is disbanded, and the boys are marching home again."

Not all coming; thousands would never come; many were sleeping in unknown graves where no loving hand might plant a flower—no gentle voice breathe a silent prayer. But many were coming—troops worn by weary march and exposure to the scorching suns of summer or sleeping out in all kinds of weather—coming, with loss of limb or suffering from a hidden bullet, but coming.

Mapleton had echoed and prolonged the glad shout of each victory, and waited impatiently the disbanding of the army. At Elm Cottage as everywhere, they could think and talk of nothing else. Will was coming soon!

Grace went down one day for the mail, and to her own trembling hands the white-winged messenger came.

"From Will!" she cried; and to an anxious crowd read; "Have been reviewed at Washington and are here (Chicago) on our way home. We have engaged passage for our company at midnight, if we can find none earlier. Thank God, the Union stands upon her feet again, and we're coming home!"

"The Lord be praised!" devoutly exclaimed old Rev. Miller, the glad tears streaming down his cheeks, while the cheers that broke upon the stillness told the people at the further end of the village that the good news had, at last, come.

Up the street Grace almost flew, waving her letter joyously at Mrs. Edwards and many other anxious home-folks who were waiting the glad tidings.

Running up the gravel walk to mother Osborne, standing with a patient smile on her face, she kissed her fondly, tenderly, remembering that the dear boys, who had left that home full of hope and high ambition, proudly keeping time to the music of the fife, would not come back with the laurels they had won. The quivering lips told of the submission to the will of Him who said: "Rejoice with those that do rejoice."

She only said, "Thank God, the war is ended. Go and tell Aunt Polly."

Though Grace never walked faster in her life, she never seemed longer on the road.

Floy saw her rapid gait while she was yet far down the road, and came running with glad expectant face to know "When?" Gwen followed as fast as her little feet could patter, calling, "Mamma's tummin, Mamma tummin! My Foy yun to meet my mamma." Grace

soon clasped her close saying, "papa's coming to-morrow! oh baby, papa's coming!"

Floy, forgetting the dignity belonging to a member of the class of '64 and a young lady of seventeen, brandished her broad hat in the air with wild hurrah, and bounded from one side of the road to the other, more jubilant than she had thought she could be again, since the sad experiences of last winter. But a sad, sad look took the place of the merry one as she said, "Oh, if only they were all coming back!" and there arose a vision of a happy, bright-faced boy, who stood that sad day upon the platform, as the train went out of sight, waving his blue cap to the group at the station weeping for them; it rose again, and a great sob prevented her from shouting the good news of, "Will's coming!" to Aunt Polly, who came to the gate now with Grant in her arms.

"At last, at last, mother!" Grace called. "They're coming home to-morrow!" and she echoed the "Thank God!" that came with a sigh of relief from the aged lips that kissed Grant as if he had been the "Hero of Appomatox."

That same mail brought letters to other homes, and all through the village and country rang the three glad words of "coming home to-morrow."

While the tongues were running fastest at the cottage the gate clicked and, answering a loud exultant rap at the door, Floy met the excited face of Mike McGuire.

"I came to tell you, Miss Grace," he panted—(ever since Grace had taught in the Grammar department Mike had been her sworn ally), "the sojers are a-cum-

min' this blessed minit. Ivery soul of 'em! Faith an yer father told me hisself, and a telegram came to him this very minute. Yer man, me father and the whole lot ov them are coming."

The boy was excitedly twisting his cap all the while, and gaining greater velocity with each sentence until now the words fairly flew.

"Yes, Mike, coming home to stay now; no more rebel bullets to face," said Aunt Polly, while Grace gave him a chair and spoke volumes of glad sympathy in his smiling face.

Floy laughed good-naturedly at Mike, while she urged Gwen to say to him—"My papa tummin, too, boy!"

"They're agoin' to hab a jublim' down town, they are, bejobbers, and they're goin' to gib 'em—hark! I heern the men a talkin; goin to hev ivery house in town desolated with flags and posies and musickins and iverybody at the depot to meet 'em. Och! I'm bustin' to see it all! We're goin' to hev a whalen old bonfire to-night;" and away he started, but Grace called him back.

"Say, Mike, did the message say where the boys are now?"

"Yes 'um; to be sure it did! Faith an' that's the same the doctor asked me to told yees, sure! I like to forgot it entirely."

"Well, where did it say?" too impatient to even smile at Mike's confusion.

"Why, at Burlington, to be sure, and it's a big supper they er goin' to gib 'em down there, and they'll stort right early in the mornin' fur home! the doctor said

"Say, I'll tell you what!" said Floy. "We ought to have a banquet for our boys to-morrow night. Let's do it! Give them a rousing welcome; and such a supper that they'll think they've reached the land of milk and honey."

"Why that'd be good, but we've no time to get ready. That'd suit me powerful well though;" and Aunt Polly, who had flown at the churning Floy had left, to look for Grace, pounded the milk with unusual energy as she kept time to her thoughts with the dash. "Might call the W. S. A. S. this evening and arrange it."

"Yes; and we could send word out into the country for soldiers' families to come," said Grace with growing interest. "Let's get to work at once. 'Twill take quick work, but I think we can push it through; let's put our heads together for the best way to circulate the news."

"Why, just let Mike and I go down town and tell it, and it will circulate itself!" and Floy's sun-down was on in a minute.

"Wait! What are you going to tell 'em? 'Pears to me you're pretty sudden!" said Aunt Polly, "There's the doctor driving by, call him;" but no use to suggest that for Floy was half-way to the gate and the loud "Hurrah! Good!" told that Doctor Osborne was in for a hearty reception.

Floy and Mike rode with him to help call the meeting at the hall at six o'clock, only two hours away. the doctor and Mike were to make announcements to the crowd in street and stores, of the supper and meeting to arrange for it; Floy got Lois and Mame and

went to the members' houses. Bills were run off and pasted up by small boys, while larger ones were detailed in various directions to bear news of the supper.

A promiscuous crowd gathered at the hall in exuberant spirits. The greatest excitement prevailed, but a royal banquet was planned—the ladies' work supplemented by that of the citizens. As the crowd was gathering at the hall, Hannah Edmonds came driving by, as Mike came bounding down the stairs, and he had the exquisite pleasure of seeing her eyes "pretty nigh pop out of her head" as he broke the news to her. "Old Dobbins" went down town faster than he ever did in his prime, and straight to the postoffice. No mail; but that made no difference in the glad heart; she hadn't expected any. She stopped at the store, bought coffee, rice, and white sugar—all rare articles at the farm—and was so talkative that the clerk scarcely recognized her.

"I'll make a sweet cake to-night," she said to Mrs. Edwards," who came down from the hall as she drove back; "Jack allus liked them and I'll fry doughnuts, roast three hens and bake pies for the doin's to-morrow night. I reckon yer can't find nothing good enough for yer captain."

Here Mame and some of the girls came running down, and Mame stopped to talk, while she waited for Floy. It pleased Hannah, but Mame wished she had not stopped for she saw a dozen or more stop to look at them with a knowing smile, and she knew that some were saying that she was already setting her cap for Jack Riley. Jack was coming home a sar-

geant, and with such a reputation for pluck and bravery that he would be more of a "catch" than the "Rough and-ready" Jack Riley used to be. Fred Linden passed them and gave Mame such a low bow, taking his cap reverently off, that Mame blushed violently, though she declared to Floy a few minutes later, "she longed to box his ears!" Hannah noticed the extra bow and snapped her eye at the impudent youth, for she thought she was "laughed at" again.

Floy came running down then, and she and Mame walked off together, Mame going a few steps with Floy that they might have a good talk.

"Fred passed while I was waiting, and you should have seen his low bow and mocking smile, with hat removed." Floy looked questioningly, and Mame went on: "He meant that I was courting Hannah Edmonds for somebody else, you know!" and Mame's laugh had a merry ring.

"Look here, Mame, what are you going to do with both of these boys?" and Floy looked deep into the blue eyes; "Jack Riley is a soldier, 'true blue,' and has suffered enough not to be wounded now in his home-coming. I like his whole-souledness any way."

A thought of a sad scene, wherein Jack Riley was a prominent character, brought a flush to her cheek for a moment but really she couldn't blame him for one mistake when so many had been made; and then, when her father had proved himself blameless Jack had asked his forgiveness.

Mame leaned against a maple by the roadside, resting her pink cheek on her hand, making a pretty picture, but vouchsafed never a word, and Floy continued:

"Fred is a splendid boy, and smart—intellectual, I mean—why don't we speak as well as we know! He has been going with you all winter, and been encouraged to do so. Don't say you haven't tried to be agreeable; don't I know?"

"Am I going to be lectured now?" asked Mame trying to look hurt, though the black eyes shone.

"Well what are you going to do now with Jack and Fred?"

"O now, Floy, don't look at me like that—we don't know that either of these young gentlemen would care to pay me further attentions Fred is jolly and I like to be with him, but I have never hinted that he might be preferred to any of the other boys, and Jack Riley, for all he's such an 'out-and-outer,' doesn't write a mite of sentiment; so you see there's no occasion for alarm."

"Mame, just as sure as Jack Riley comes home, and he's coming to-morrow, you'll have to choose between them, and 'twill serve you right, you little flirt—yes you are a flirt—I might omit the adjective perhaps —and if 'tis slightly embarrassing 'twill serve you right, only I want you to do the right choosing."

"Then would you be kind enough to tell me which one?" Mame still laughed, though Floy could see that she had a great deal of earnestness back of the smiling front.

"Jack of course. True, Fred is one of the 64s, book-keeper now in his father's store, and perhaps will become one of the firm by and by, and of course he's 'tony', but he's stingy too; and besides all that, Jack Riley is a soldier; enlisted in the first call for men,

and deserves first place," and Floy's eyes showed the earnestness with which she was talking. Soldier-boys deserve the preference now. Hurrah for the 'boys in blue,'" and with a school-girl kiss and "good-night" the girls parted for their respective homes.

Lights shone far into the night all over Mapleton, and many frosted cakes, dressed chickens, pies and doughnuts, were waiting the home-coming, ere the candles were blown out. Out at Elm Cottage, Aunt Polly made six cherry and six gooseberry pies, tripping round as if but sixteen years old, and singing snatches of songs learned at the huskings and wool-pickings of her girlhood-days. Grace sang Gwen and Grant to sleep with lullabys of "papa," and stirred up a pyramid cake very like the one she sent in the Christmas box of '61; "Welcome Home" was inscribed thereon, instead of "Merry Christmas," her face beaming with happiness while she did it.

Floy dressed the turkey, ready to begin roasting, the first thing in the morning, and arranged small bouquets from house-plants for other cakes.

The next morning, the town was all excitement. A liberty pole was raised, on the top of which exultantly floated the Stars and Stripes. Across the principal street that led from the depot, a large flag was suspended with the picture of Lincoln, the martyr president, and Grant and Sherman beneath it.

"Coming home! Coming home to stay!" was echoed through the streets, and whispered by many wives and mothers as they smoothed the hair of the children, all so changed in size during the long absence.

"Will has never seen United States Grant, you

know," said Grace, that morning, as the doctor trotted both him and Gwen on his knee.

The doctor, and Mrs. Osborne had driven up to talk and lay plans. "Won't it be a treat to see Will grab him though?" and the doctor laughed at the thought of it. "Say, drape a flag round him for a dress, can't you?" and the doctor held him up while the women all laughed.

"He'd look lots prettier in the white embroidered dress mother gave him," said Grace.

"I'll take matters into my own hands if you won't help me," and the merry twinkle told them something was coming. "He's to be dressed in pants, army blue, and we'll wrap a flag round him for a shawl!"

A chorus of laughter followed this declaration, but the doctor vowed 'twould be just the thing, and Floy thought so too.

"But we've no time now to get a suit of men's clothes made; 'tis nine o'clock now, and we must be at the hall at half past ten, and the train will be in at three," further objected Grace.

"You just cut them out—pants and coat from the old suit Will left and I'll make them on Mrs. Osborne's machine and have them here by twelve o'clock," said Floy, flying to the closet and bringing out a suit of army-blue.

Aunt Polly thought it would be a capital joke, so the case was won, for pants.

How they laughed when, at half past one o'clock, Grant was put in his suit of blue! the two big brass buttons the doctor had Floy put on the coat, looked larger than the tiny hands that played with them.

Grace took his cloak along, too, but when they started from the Osborne home the doctor carried Grant with only a white bonnet, which mother Osborne had constructed after Floy left, above the huge flag which enveloped him.

Gwen was dressed all in white—pure white—with a badge of red, white and blue ribbon on her right shoulder, and from her seat in the baby-buggy informed the passers-by:

"That's my boy-baby!—my boy-baby doin' to meet my papa," and she put up her baby mouth—too sweet for anything except to be kissed.

The streets were thronged with excited people, wagon loads of them coming in from the country and the whole of the village in motion toward the depot.

The "Home Guard" were out in full. Grandma Clayton, with Jimmie's two little boys wearing pantaloons and suspenders now, and each wondering what their "pa" would say about how they had grown.

Long before the train was due, Kate McGuire, with all six boys, was on the platform, but she had hard work to keep them, and only the thought that Pat might miss them induced her to try. Mike slipped off in spite of promised nuts if he'd be good, much to Kate's dismay lest he'd get "jammed gin the keers" by the crowd.

A haunting dread overshadowed Hannah Edmonds' face as, ever and anon, she elongated her body and peered over the heads about her, down the road for the train.

"I allus wuz a feered of the pesky thing," she muttered half aloud, to the evident amusement of a merry

group of school-girls; but for once their giggling didn't worry her. "'Twill be a miracle if it don't run off that curve and kill 'em all right before our eyes."

Mame and Floy stood arm in arm behind Gwen's buggy; for they wanted to see Will's meeting with the children; they were wondering who they'd see first and how they would get to their brothers.

Lois couldn't be found anywhere, though 'twas no matter of alarm in such a promiscuous crowd.

A whistle-down, below the curve, brought all heads up at least three inches higher than was their wont, and with various expressions of the same glad expectations, the crowd involuntarily surged trainward.

Were they coming?

The engine puffed boastfully. Yes; they were coming; the front platform has blue caps showing.

Panting, puffing, screeching with delight at the happiness it bore, came the iron-armored steed; lips smiled and quivered.

"There's Pat McGuire on the lower step of the front car!" exclaimed Aunt Polly; "do you see anything of Will?" but Grace's answer was lost in the cheers of the watchers and shouts of the home coming.

The Mapleton Cornet Band blowed like fifteen miniature bellows upon "Home again," but 'twas all lost breath, for the boys broke rank and came pell-mell—each, as if by magic, to the one waiting for him.

"There's John! Oh!" and Mame went flying to meet the broad-shouldered young captain who, after giving a hasty survey of the crowd bounded down the steps and was caught in the long embrace of a wrinkled-faced old lady who had elbowed her way toward

him. Floy's big eyes were filled with tears that fell unheeded as she thought of that one whose coming would have made this so complete. She turned involuntarily to Doctor and Mrs. Osborne to see them both weeping, he caressingly stroking the bowed head.

"Will! Will!" cried Grace excitedly at her side, and on the platform of the car the fine, proudly borne form of William Morris was seen, standing a moment to scan the sea of faces for the one which had haunted his dreams. He seemed to have heard that voice above the din, for a happy light made the face shine, as waving the left hand involuntarily, he sprang with boyish agility from the steps into the arms of Grace and Aunt Polly, who, laughing and crying simultaneously, caught him, Aunt Polly pounding him on the back, as if he were a naughty school-boy.

"Here, let me see him a minute!" cried Floy laughing till the tears chased one another down her cheek. Will put them aside to clasp the tall graceful figure, while he thought sadly of the lonely grave in the church-yard, and the sad events which had driven the roses and much of the old-time merriment from Floy's face.

"My babies!" but ere the words had left his lips, Doctor Osborne had put the bundle in the flag into his arm, and thrown back the flag.

Proudly, fondly, Will kissed his "boy in blue," kissed him again and again, and with a hearty laugh that brought the crowd surging about him, held up the eight-months-old boy in pants!

Grant laughed and cooed in high glee at being tossed in his favorite way.

"Hoopy-doo, boy-baby!" called Baby Gwen, standing up in her baby-buggy and tossing up both little hands. Will almost dropped his boy in his eagerness to seize her.

"Take him, take him!" and then hurried to rain kisses all over her pretty baby-face, while Jack Riley, shaking off the sobbing Hannah with: "Don't cry so, if I have come home," proposed three cheers for "United States Grant Morris."

They were given with a vim, while the object of the ear-splitting hurrahs, pulled the two big brass buttons on his soldier-coat in great astonishment, but laughed his appreciation as the echo died away.

Jack returned the warm greetings of the ladies, though 'twas a new thing to him, and he blushed like a school-girl, Hannah hovering near him in real maternal pride; but 'twas plain he was looking for some one else, so Floy whispered, "right through that crowd to the left," and following with his eyes he saw Mame in a new pink cambric shaking hands right and left with the "blue caps," and in a minute, had both her plump hands in his own vice-like grip:

"Hello, little rose-bud," he said in tones her mother didn't hear, "aren't you going to welcome all the Yanks home?"

"O goody, good! I'm so glad!" next instant, Mame's face burned scarlet at her impulsive rush. "Glad to have the war over and you all back home again! Welcome, welcome home!" Then she drew her hands away as something in his eyes made her think of the great impropriety of the position.

"Are you glad?" and the smile that lit up the sun-

tanned face made it handsome, or at least Mame thought so, as she adroitly drew the subject from themselves to the united happy people about them.

One of the band noticed this meeting, and a fierce look gleamed in his eye as he turned to his music-sheet, and the discord made just then, caused the leader to look straight at Fred Linden.

Floy saw that too, and thought "Bless them;" and a sad lonesome look came into the big gray eyes as "Oh, Harry, Harry! If you had only come back!" went up from her heart.

"Where's Lois?" asked Will.

"Here!" rang a clear voice as Lois made her way toward him, with outstretched hands, forgetting that Will had but one, closely followed by the young man in captain's uniform who had found her at the further end of the platform and given the tiny hands such a strong pressure that a red spot still showed on them. Doctor Osborne on behalf of the citizens invited the company to the banquet, and a grander spectacle was never witnessed in Mapleton than when the victorious heroes filed up the street to the tune of "The girl I left behind me," accompanied on either side by a jubilant crowd. As they passed under the hanging banner with its three hero-portraits, a loud enthusiastic cheer burst from the soldier citizens and the air was full of blue caps in an instant.

At the hall Judge Burton's speech was responded to by Col. Morris. The supper was superb. The table fairly groaned with tempting viands and was beautifully decorated with flags and flowers. 'Twas arranged for the "boys" to be served first and together;

but they broke rank at Will's suggestion and each ate with his own wife, or sweetheart, and many with children on their knees. Will's laugh rang high among the many, with Grace on one side, Aunt Polly on the other, Gwen on his lap and Grant on Grace's.

Floy, Mame, and Lois—in fact all of the 64s—were among the waiters. Captain Edwards and Sergeant Riley did not eat with the first table, but later, with a table full of laughing young people, they sat down with Lois and Mame. The captain was talkative to-night, even jolly, and Lois surprised every one with her sparkling wit. Guy, Fred, and Carl, had served with the girls, and now were getting their reward by sitting at supper with them. Floy and Guy were thrown together; they had always been chums, and then Floy felt more kindly toward Guy because he had been Harry's best friend; and to-night her thoughts were full of sad memories of him and the home-coming she had planned for in the happy days before that "Missing at roll" had paled her cheeks and darkened her joyous life.

She admired Guy too, and, since he had left college, ten days before its close, on purpose to help welcome the returning soldiers, she had thought still better of him. Mame was surprised at herself and surprised the lookers-on, with her brilliant remarks that came so fluently to-night; she wondered why she had so much to say to Jack Riley, and how proud she felt of him, whom she had rather patronized in the long ago. Fred gave her a withering glance occasionally and then was devotion itself to Emma Burton, superb to-night in light blue silk; but Mame

smiled saucily back, to Floy's intense satisfaction.

"Come, let's go home," said John, soon after supper, drawing Lois away from the merry crowd that had nearly shaken his arm off. "I want you all to myself," and he whispered something that brought the color, dying her cheeks like red carnations. "Do you know Lois, when we heard of Lee's surrender, I cried like a child, and then shouted with the whole army until my throat was sore, because the scenes of war were virtually past, and home, with its comfort and dear home-folks was ours again. One face dearer than all the world beside, I could see."

"Your mother's—yes;" said Lois softly through glad tears. The gallant captain caught her in his arms and covered her face with passionate kisses, saying all manner of little nothings scarcely expected of sensible John, and the minutes flew into hours unheeded.

'Twas late—it must have been—though John had stopped the clock at eleven—when Lois asked demurely—"When are you going home, Captain Edwards? The soldiers have been sleeping on downy feather-beds in their happy homes for some time. Why is your 'home-coming' postponed?"

"I'm on picket duty to-night—but my home isn't ready for me until you go to it with me. Say, when can I have my own home blessed and cheered by my own darling wife? Say when, right away. Think of the roughing it I've gone through. I want to settle down now; lay aside the soldier uniform and soldier life—don the dress of a citizen and work for my wife."

"A poet and didn't know it," laughed Lois. "I can't get ready for a long time, though. Now don't look disappointed; please don't!"

"Now in two weeks, at the furthest, we're to be married. Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must. Say yes and I go at once, home to my mother; say yes, quick, for I want to see the dear old place awfully bad, and it's most daylight."

"Well, may be; your ma's anxious to see you, I know."

CHAPTER XXV

WEDDING BELLS

"Dang it all!" and Jack Riley stopped whistling his troubled air, though he'd no idea that he'd been doing so, and shelled seed-corn with renewed vigor. "I wish I wasn't so hard up! but I'm busted and it aint no use to think any more about it. But conslam it! I can't think of anything else! I haint got a home to offer her and she deserves a fine one—the little beauty. By Joe! I'd work my finger-nails off to dress that girl in silk. But I can't get started to make anything. Here's this eighty acres twixt Aunt Hannah and me; an old log-house; stable of the same kind; Dobbins on his last legs, one cow and two hogs! 'Twould seem like paradise with little Mame here, smilin' at a feller, but oh pshaw! she wouldn't if I could ask her, and I couldn't if she would. Some day, I'll pound up my cheek and out with it though, and tell her when I get a cage fit for her I'll catch her"—absently pouring the seed-corn on the granary floor and putting the cobs in the sack. "If only she would'nt make such bright eyes at me; but what is a feller to do? When she tosses her head over on one side and looks up so sassy like, I just am busted up." And a merry laugh ended the soliloquy, as the memory of last night's gate-scene came up again.

Mame had been bright and saucy all the way home

from church, and when, at the gate, he let her pass, she looked too pretty for Jack to resist kissing her, so he did, as conscience dictated.

"Shame! what would my mother say? Naughty boy!" she had said, but didn't look very much offended, then ran into the house and left him.

"B-r-e-a-k-f-a-s-t !" called Hannah from the kitchen-door. And, as Hannah watched Jack tie the sack, bring his hand-planter and come ready to start from there to the field, her face took on a kinder, more contented look than it had for years.

"O, ye must take time to eat your vittles and ye don't need to stew around havin' everything just ready to go to work the minnit yer swaller yer breakfast nuther. Take things more moderate and yer'll stand it longer, is my motter."

"There's so much to do, I want to pitch in with all my might," said Jack, filling the tin wash-pan with the gourd; this gourd looked natural and he remembered it always hung by the bucket. It now looked homelike to him.

"Everything's out of whack tho'; and I don't know where to begin."

"I calkerlate to help you plant the corn, I can cover with the hoe. I did let things run down, I spose, but I was bizzy raisin' nuff to eat and keep Dobbins;" and Hannah thought to herself that Jack hadn't left the fences in repair by any means, but she wouldn't hurt his feelings now, when he was trying with all his might.

The boys had been at home since the previous Wednesday only, but Jack had fixed the garden fence,

spaded up the beds, while Hannah planted her "truck," and on Friday and Saturday had began plowing for corn; but had stopped that, discouraged, when old Dobbins couldn't stand it, and this morning the way looked hard indeed.

"I must get a team somehow; old Dobbins is dead in his tracks. I aint going to work an old stack of bones!" and Jack looked hard at the pork and eggs on his plate.

Hannah watched him seriously a minute, with a knowing look in her eye.

"'Tis kinder hard on a young feller that would like to cut shines with the gals, to drive such a nag as Dobbins, aint it?"

Jack's face reddened; the mention of this tender subject almost spoiled his good resolutions to make the best of the old place, and not growl nor mope.

Hannah actually smiled as she went on, like a cat teasing a mouse she means to breakfast on:

"Mame Edwards would put on airs sure enuff gala-vantin 'round behind Dobbins."

"Well, conslam it, you're hard up for something to say!—'taint so measly funny to be busted, that you need to throw it up to me. Perhaps I could strike a job in town and hire a livery team," he said with a meaning look; for Jack was angry, though he knew Hannah didn't mean to wound him.

"There! Don't get mad; you must stand a little fun, youk now I must crack my jokes," and Hannah laughed at her humorous spell. Jack smiled himself, for life usually was the wrong side out with Hannah. "How much would a two-hoss team cost now?" she asked.

"Tisn't any use to think about a team or even a plug horse to go with old bones; for I haven't fifteen dollars in paper, and I haven't spent a cent I could help!" and Jack looked sad indeed.

"Well, 'tain't goin'to cost nothin' to be civil an' answer my question on your guess on a team," said Aunt Hannah, with eyes turned down on her plate. Jack thought she was hurt and was ashamed.

"Well, you couldn't get anything like a team for less than three hundred dollars, and it might as well be three thousand as far as I am concerned."

"I wonder who's got one to sell?" went on Hannah.

"Consarn it! It makes me mad to go on over it. Like as if 'twas of some use. There! I don't want to talk rough before a lady. You see I've grown quite mannerly in associating with the Southern rebs, ha, ha! But I do want to be somebody, and it's such blamed up-hill business," and Jack leaned back in his chair quite despondent.

Hannah scrutinized him closely. He looked a young Hercules—brown-faced, bright-eyed; and she was very proud of him and his roused ambition.

"O well, boy, don't stew over not ownin' a team; ef yer'd have one like as not yer'd be a hankerin' after somethin' else just as hard. Yer'd want a wagon, may be; an' then yer'd set yerself up for a buggy and new-fangled corn-planter, and there's no end to the wishin'. I calkerlate this log-house wouldn't set well with yer long, and ye'd keep a frettin' and a graspin' for more. It's wicked to be so cravin'."

"O pshaw, don't be green! 'Taint wicked to want some things to work with. What's a fellow to do,

drag the plow himself? No; if I had a good—even a fair team—and wagon, I'd be fixed. But I can't go my face for them, and if I could get time on them, I could'nt pay for them in any kind of time."

"Well, if a team would satisfy yer there ain't no use in parleyin'!"—and Aunt Hannah stepped out to the ash-hopper by the smoke-house, and began shoveling ashes out of it.

"Why, what's up?" asked the astonished Jack.

"Wait," came the answer, coolly, and presently Hannah drew from the bottom of the pile a tin box, and hurried into the house with it, saying "Come in," then thrust it into the hands of the wondering Jack, whose hands shook like he had the ague again. She couldn't be joking, of course—who ever heard of Hannah Edmonds playing a practical joke? He fumbled with the catch while these thoughts ran through his befogged brain, and now Hannah's slim fingers had undone it for him; then she pranced delightfully around as Jack shouted:

"Where on earth did you get all this?—piles of money!—greenbacks!"

"It's yours—I saved it for you—all the money you sent home—I never spent a cent! Count it!" and her face shone with joy.

"Three hundred and twenty dollars!" he almost gasped. Then grabbing Hannah he whirled her around and kissed the old wrinkled face fondly.

"You always was too good to me, but who ever would have dreamed of this?" and Jack was so glad, Hannah felt quite paid for the stinting and saving she had done through the hard times.

Jack Riley didn't plant corn that day, but went to town to look around for a team, and his step rang clear and firm on the sidewalk as he thought of the money in the tin box to pay for it.

Mame saw him, as she was helping her mother till the garden, and blushed so prettily when he tipped his blue cap to her, that she reminded him of the pink roses, out at the farm, pinned to his coat just as she pinned it at the banquet.

"Will's is the place to look for a team; I expect the Morris property has been divided, and Will has a young team, that I think perhaps you could get reasonably." A mere thought of how 'twould be paid for, crossed Doctor Osborne's mind, but 'twas followed by another that Jack was honest and would pay in time all right.

Jack got the team next day. Floy hated to see them go, but knew they reminded Will of the unpleasantness, and was glad to have Jack get them, if they must go. Lois was at Elm Cottage when Jack went for the team, talking quite confidentially with Floy, but although Jack spoke to them and laughed merrily, he thought neither compared with the "little gypsy" down town.

"Now I can work—get-up!" as he drove exultantly down the homeward road. "We'll get in a good crop, fix up the place as decent as I can, and next fall, little sweetheart, we'll see what's what! I'll put in my best licks for you, 'bright-eyes;'" and the rattle of the wagon and clatter of hoofs kept a fitting accompaniment to Jack's thoughts as he whistled merrily along until the old-fashioned log-house was visible through the trees.

One big room, and a kitchen, an after-thought, built on the west, made the house. But 'twas picturesque in situation, surrounded by large locust trees and oaks, and looked "fair as the garden of the Lord" to Jack as he saw it now, feeling that he could face a world of difficulties.

Wednesday evening, the alumni met at the schoolhouse to plan for the reception of the Class of '65. On similar occasions Fred had called for Mame and it gave her a little uneasiness—why, she didn't try to explain; but she grew very anxious to avoid Fred, and quite early got ready to go for Floy.

"You look like a wild rose, little sister," said John admiringly, as she donned the cambric. "Is there ugly thorns concealed to wound some poor fellow who'd daringly try to steal you?"

"Oh! such sentimental comparisons from my sedate, sensible old John!" and Mame laughed, though she saw a covert meaning in the simile. "Mother, do you hear him?—flattering and filling your baby's head with foolish fancies?"

Mrs. Edwards smiled o'er the sewing; then sighed a soft little sigh, for her baby was growing into womanhood so fast, and she fain would keep her baby.

"If you're going up to Elm Cottage, I guess I'll go with you; I want to see Will a while. Shall you be lonely, mother? Come, go along; time enough to work," and the captain gallantly tied on the poke-bonnet, and the happy family went together.

"I'm really sorry, Mame and I can't stay here and all visit together," Floy said, as the girls sat ready to set off to the society meeting. "I'm not nearly through

visiting with Will, though I can't get a word out of him about the war. We have to answer all the questions ourselves." Then to John, sub rosa: "Why didn't you bring Lois and go up to the school-house with us? You're such a sensible engaged couple, it is a comfort to have you around." The mischievous twinkle in the gray eyes didn't escape John's attention.

"Well, now you want to be taking notes upon the proper bearing, for I assure you 'tis a hard thing to be dignified and to conduct oneself properly," replied the grave captain.

"That will be one thing I'll never have to learn; a jolly old maid I mean to be. I'm going to apply for a position in the school here, next year," she said. "Seriously now—and schoolma'am and old maid are synonymous words, you know."

Then, arm-in-arm, Floy and Mame walked away slowly, to have a good walk and talk, not unusual to them, and John watched them, thinking of what might have been had Harry just returned.

The girls agreed they'd go home together and alone. But Guy and Fred joined them, as they put on their hats; they couldn't rudely tell them they preferred to be alone, particularly as the boys didn't ask them.

At Mame's gate, Fred asked if he could call for her Sabbath evening to go to church. Mame had feared this very thing, and had told Floy she should say emphatically, "No thank you!" but 'twas entirely another matter to say it with an old school-friend, looking her full in the face, and pleading his cause with melting blue eyes, and Mame hesitated.

"Is some one else coming?" he demanded, a little peremptorily.

"No"—in a tone which said, "I don't know for sure, but expect he will."

"Well, what's to hinder you then? say yes, of course."

"Well—come then. Good-night," and she hurried in to throw herself into the rocking-chair and call herself names, for not being brave enough to say "no" when she wanted to.

"Of course Jack Riley doesn't expect me to refuse other company if he doesn't say he's coming. How do I know that he cares to come? I haven't done anything out of the way, and don't need to have a funeral over it now." But somehow, Mame didn't feel good; Jack's face had grown clouded, she could see, and she knew he wanted to keep her all to himself and had said so by his expressions plain as English could say it.

Floy scolded her till she cried. Then called her "a little goose" for doing so, but assured her she could make it straight afterward.

Saturday evening, Mame went to the postoffice and met Jack Riley. She saw him ride past her on her way down, on one of his new horses.

Jack was a fearless rider, straight as an arrow, and looked quite knightly to Mame now that Fred was the favored escort. As she entered the postoffice he was just opening a perfumed square envelope with a huge bell on the back, which Mame recognized at once as a card to Rev. Miller's reception after Lois and John's marriage at the church.

Jack read it with: "Whew! that's something like it. Hurrah for the captain! Taken a prize in times of peace," and walked up the street with the captain's pretty sister, though he wore a blouse and big straw hat. Fred passed them in a neat business suit and button-hole bouquet, and bowed smilingly at Mame but almost scowled at Jack, who gave him a condescending "Good evening, Fred."

At the gate, Mame invited him in and he went "to see John a few minutes." Of course John was down to Rev. Miller's, but Mame entertained Jack so pleasantly in the cheery little sitting-room that his absence was endured patiently.

"Say, I'm coming for you to go to church to-morrow night," he said as the clock struck nine, and he rose to go.

"No, I'm real sorry, but you mustn't. Fred Linden asked me first, and—and you hadn't told me you wanted to come—so how was I to know?" and the girl's embarrassment helped Jack considerably, indeed he looked mischievous as he said: "Well, you just send Linden off; for I'm coming sure as the evening comes."

"O no! Please, Jack, I won't let him come again ever—that is"—and the face was scarlet now—"you can call next time if you choose. Now be good! it's all your own fault; why didn't you say so in time!" and she looked defiantly into his face.

"Well, this is time enough, and didn't you know I was coming again anyway?" Mame looked guilty, though she laughingly shook her head.

"Well, I'm coming for you to-morrow night and if Linden is here, you'll have to choose between us!"

the very thing Floy had predicted and Mame dreaded so.

"O, please don't—ask anything else and 'tis yours! But spare me that. I'd really hate to send you off, and of course I'd be compelled to do so."

She raised her eyes again, but they fell before the strange look in those bent upon her.

"Ask what I will and 'tis mine, why, little girl, do you know what you are saying? Don't you see what I'd like—what else I'd ask for if I dared? O, Mame, I love you so, and I'd ask for you, to be my own darling wife. Forgive me, Mame, for talking like this to you—when I've no home to offer you, and am not high-toned like Fred Linden; he can give you a better home than I can, and people say you'd made a handsome match, but oh, little darling Mame, he'll never love you more or truer."

Mame had turned her head away during this passionate outburst; but Jack thought he'd make a clean breast of it if it killed him.

"I'm only plain Jack Riley, but I love you more than all the world. This is no new thing to me, I've always loved you. For your sake, I'll be somebody; will be a man good and true, if I can't be fine. When I've a home for you, may I claim you, my own sweet black-eyed Mame?" He could hardly wait for the answer—and strong as he was he trembled like a leaf.

"Yes," she whispered, "and it need not be a tony one, neither."

Then Jack covered her face with kisses, and made her say: "I love you, Jack," though Mame declared "'twas naughty."

"Now you won't come to-morrow night, will you?" Mame asked slyly.

"You just bet I will! Do you reckon I'd let that young swell go parading my girl around? not a bit of it!"

"But my word is out; I can't go back on my promise, can I? You want me to hold a promise sacred, don't you?" said Mame, eying him cunningly.

"No, not that one; a bad promise is better broken."

"Fred thought 'twas a good one, and how am I to tell him not to call without giving a reason?" and Mame did look perplexed.

"Oh, I can tell him in a very few words, if that's all," said Jack.

"Don't you dare! you bad boy! But really, Jack, I think 'twould be better to keep the engagement since 'tis made. I'll be very decorous, and think of you all the time during the evening."

"Will you? Well, if I may see you soon again;" and Jack gave up, since the engagement was made.

"We'll go up to Elm Cottage, Monday eve, if you like," said Mame, wondering what Floy would say at the whole arrangement.

"Good! Well, I'll stand Linden swinging you this once, but 'twill be harder than facing the rebs."

Floy was provoked and didn't hesitate to say so, when she heard that Fred was coming to church with Mame. So when Mame asked her to go home with her from afternoon Sunday-school next day, and stay until church, Floy gave her a decided: "No; I told you not to allow Fred to come, and now you must bear it! I feel more sorry for Jack than for you!"

"O, don't be so cruelly just. Remember how good I wish to be—am going to be I mean," said Mame, assuming a penitent face, but wanting to laugh and tell Floy all about it. Floy's mood didn't invite confidence though, and Mame decided she'd wait.

Evening came, and with it a crowd at church, for the company of husbands, sons and lovers induced many to go who usually stay for want of an escort. John and Lois were the interesting pair, of course, since one week from to-night their marriage ceremony would be performed before this altar.

They thought of it, and a proud, happy look lit up John's face, while Lois paled a mite—'twould be giving up her girlhood. Fred and Mame came in a little late. Mame believed Fred called for her later purposely, to let everybody see who she came with. And everybody saw, for they walked down one aisle without finding a seat and were motioned by the usher to the other side of the house, when Mame's embarrassment was relieved, as a voice whispered, "Here, Linden," and Jack with another soldier-boy gave up their seats.

"Thank you," Mame whispered as she quickly passed in. Floy, from the choir, gave her a look which said: "Didn't I tell you Jack was pure gold?"

Next evening, Floy and Will were walking up from the old home, which was soon to be sold, when Jack and Mame came up the road, evidently on good terms, and Floy's kindlier feelings for Mame came up at once.

Such a merry time as they had at the cottage! Grace and Floy played, they all sang, but Jack, who

claimed "he had no music in his soul, or rather had a great deal, for he had never got any out " Gwen and Grant's pretty ways and cunning speeches were laughed at o'er and o'er again. Will brought in the strawberries, and Aunt Polly the cream and cake to eat with them.

"A home like that is a little earthly paradise," said Jack as he took Mame's arm and they walked home in the June moonlight. On either side, the maple trees, which gave the town its name, cast their long shadows in the road.

"It makes one home-sick to see how cozy and happy Will looks with his family. Now if I wasn't so 'tarnal poor! Excuse me, but if I wasn't so poor, I could have a home and a darling wife too, right away—"

"O no, not right away—my ma couldn't spare me now," interrupted Mame. "I don't care a whit about a fine home. I could begin at the foot of the ladder and brave poverty and help to make a more comfortable home without a pang of regret, but ma couldn't let John and me both go now;" and Mame's brave face pleased Jack immensely.

"Bless your dear brave heart! I want a neat little frame cage for you; where you can rule with a high hand, and I want it by next fall at the farthest."

"Now, Jack Riley, we'll do nothing of the sort! Your Aunt Hannah thinks the world of you, and we're going to have her live with us," said Mame emphatically.

"You're an angel, Mame! But you don't know Aunt Hannah, nor how poorly you could live together. She's got a good 'gizzard,' as the boys used to say, as

ever was; but she's rough on the outside and"—Jack wouldn't finish that she was "cross and peevish," for she had stood by him through "thick and thin."

"I know she's peculiar, and may be sometimes gets out of sorts. So do I; but I've always felt sorry for her; she seemed to have such a sad, 'go it alone' expression, and I want to give her a comfortable home and hearty welcome with us." Mame was in earnest and the tears gleamed in her eyes at the thought.

"You're the best girl in the world, Mame! Hannah is to be pitied, and I'd be awful glad if she could have a home with us. But say, if we can live together, what's the use of waiting?—what's the matter with having a double wedding next Sunday night? we'll do it!—'twould be a capital surprise!"

"Next Sunday! O my! I couldn't get ready, and ma wouldn't really hear a word of it." But ere Jack left her, she had promised to try, and would say for sure, Wednesday evening, if she should happen to see him.

She saw him, and 'twas arranged; Mrs. Edwards came into the room for a few minutes, but didn't stay long, only held Jack's hand in both her own while she said, "Be good to her, Jack"—and hurried out.

Mame had told her mother and John together on Tuesday morning, and Mrs. Edwards fought the plan hard. She had other hopes for Mame; Jack Riley was a good boy, perhaps, but he was poor and not one of the "upper tens" like Fred.

John championed the cause of Jack, both because he was a "boy in blue" and because he was a fine

fellow, "with heart as true as ever beat beneath a coat of blue."

She was finally won over when Mame declared she'd marry no one else, and after breakfast the blue silk was brought out and tried on Mame with real maternal pride.

Mame told no one but Floy, who laughed till she cried, and planned and planned, but felt so lonely as the time drew near and she thought: "If Harry had but come."

The church was crowded—jammed, that Sabbath evening, to witness the marriage of Captain Edwards to Lois Miller. Both had won such a high esteem in the hearts of the soldiers and their friends that many soldiers came from the surrounding country and brought their wives to welcome their captain into the ranks of the blessed.

The church had been appropriately decorated the previous day by Floy, Will, and Grace, assisted by everybody they needed. A floral bell was suspended o'er the place where the vows would be exchanged, while flowers and bouquets were placed tastily everywhere about the altar.

Mame came up in the afternoon and helped, so no one would wonder at her absence. Rev. Boydston, the preacher on the charge, preached a good sermon, but the audience was restless and when he had ended, the choir's singing was lost to the audience entirely, for all were watching the door.

The bridal party came during the song. Rev. Miller with his daughter—beautiful to-night, in pure white Swiss, long white veil, and orange blossoms crowning

her black hair—a face reflecting a soul as pure and good as her dress was spotless.

The party of friends remained standing as John advanced from another aisle which he had entered with his mother, followed by Mame and Jack. Mame wore a long white cashmere shawl, which quite enveloped her, and she looked pretty, though some wondered why she wore the shawl.

Her mother stood slightly in front of her on taking their places. Guy walked with Floy, and Fred with Emma Burton.

A lull fell. The firm, strong "I will" was followed by the lower, but quite as earnest pledge, from the fair bride. Rev. Boydston's solemn voice said: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!" and John and Lois stepped aside. Rev. Miller took Rev. Boydston's place and Jack Riley and Mame stood under the floral bell! Mame had handed the shawl to Floy and revealed the blue silk wedding-dress that adorned the blushing bride. The surprise was complete—a cheer almost broke out, held only by Rev. Miller's uplifted hand.

The beautiful service was ended, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Riley stepped back with Capt and Mrs. Edwards. Rev. Miller prayed for the new homes just begun, and the party departed for Rev. Miller's reception.

CHAPTER XXVI

CALHOUN ASHLEY

Mapleton was not the only town whence grateful rejoicing went up to heaven; but from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Mason and Dixon line to the Canadian boundaries, from city and from village—but not quite from every house—for in the North as well as the South there were some who rejoiced when the Bluecoats had to turn their backs to the Confederates; some who showed in their faces the gladness felt in their cowardly hearts at the defeat of "the great general" Grant, at Cold Harbor, and who showed plainer still the treason and disloyalty they did not dare express in words, when Lincoln, the nation's chief and last love of the young republic, fell at the hand of such as they —devout thanks arose that the war was ended.

That dear ones, absent so long, were flocking home on every train; that the horrible roar of cannon was to give place to the peaceful hum of the factory; that the musket was to be exchanged for the hoe, and, as of old, swords to be beaten into plowshares.

The scene was also changed in the South. Where once bloomed the cotton-plant, now lay bleaching, 'neath the Southern sun, the bones of real heroes—both blue and gray. Where a few years since, stood the graceful orange and lemon groves, is now stretched a wilderness of dead brush, mowed by the plow in can-

non ball and whistling musket-shot. But another change and mightier is wrought. The black man, no longer slave, goes not forth in fear of lash but in love of wife and child to earn a living for them. The planter no longer armed with whip and pistol, but with money or provisions goes to hire and not to drive his fellow-man. The dusky mother goes not forth with weeping to the auction block; but goes with her child in her arms to the sanctuary of the Lord, to offer in her simple way her thankfulness for freedom.

While the North had some disloyal sons, among the true blue bulk, the South held some loyal citizens whose love for the old flag clung to them, but alas! many more, who forsook their love for the Stars and Stripes and went off after the strange gods of state rights and stars and bars, and they were men with as kind hearts and pure motives as were found in the North. Among the latter class, was Mrs. Ashley, and it was humanity alone, and her high sense of right, that prompted her to argue so earnestly and plead so patiently with her husband to allow the young Union soldier, who lay so sick at the prison, to be brought to their elegant home near Andersonville.

"The war is over now, and what excuse can you have for not permitting Cal to bring the boy who saved his life to our home, where he can receive proper care? The horrors of that prison is a black spot on the reputation of the South; you know it, all know it, though they may not acknowledge the fact!" Mrs. Ashley sat at breakfast with her husband and Calhoun, their only child, whom Harry Osborne had helped after the storming of Ft. McAllister. Before Mr. Ashley could make

the objection his face threatened, Cal added his appeal to that of his mother.

"Father, I am willing to incur the enmity of every neighbor we have, rather than to suffer that noble boy to die in that miserable hole for want of care. He ran the risk of being captured to help me, when another five minutes would have ended my life; he was taken prisoner on account of his noble action, and now, for us not to risk the displeasure of a few inhuman people is what I call ungrateful and cowardly, too."

"Well, well! Bring him, if you must, but don't complain to me when our neighbors and friends snub us and dub us common Yanks. Go to him with your troubles and see how you feel then," and the old man left his breakfast almost untouched and hurried from the house.

"Now, Cal, you hitch up the horse to the spring wagon, put in the feather-bed and bring him here by noon. Your father will soon be over his pet and will treat the boy kindly, I know. One glance into his pale boyish face and one sound of his voice as he piteously calls for his friends would melt the hardest-hearted, outside of that wretched place; but I think those prison-keepers have become so accustomed to sights of misery and suffering that they don't feel as others do."

Calhoun needed no urging, but was soon dashing down the road toward Andersonville.

"Well, general, I came down to get that boy; mother would insist on taking him out to the place and I—" Cal started to say, "I feel that I owe him a debt of gratitude which I see a chance now, to pay," but

the burly old general interrupted him with a gruff:

"Go out and see if he's there first, for several have been taken away since yesterday and several more piled up out there ready for burying. But you can take him, if he's there, for the quicker they are taken away the better; if I had my way we would soon be rid of the whole set. No wonder we got whipped when half the South is begging for the Yankees' lives."

Cal passed out, leaving the old general cursing the "chicken-hearted women."

Once inside the barricades, Cal hastened to the corner where he had left Harry lying the day before, and found him almost in the same place.

"Harry!" Harry!" called he in frightened tones, fearing that help had come too late.

Harry rolled up his glassy eyes quickly, for he expected to see one of the prison-keepers and knew he would probably get a kick if he did not stir; for that was the usual way of telling whether a sick man was dead or alive. But when Harry saw who it was that bent over him and heard Cal's "I'm going to take you home!" he smiled through his pain and reached his wasted hand up in the most pitiful manner.

"Oh," he said, struggling to rise, "I shall see mother and Floy once more before I die. Oh, I'm so glad I helped you, for now you'll take me away from this miserable tomb. Oh, take me quick, sir, please!"

"That I will, poor boy, may be I can then pay you the debt I owe you. If you had not stopped to help me you would not have been here," said Cal Ashley. "Oh, I am to blame for this!"

"Well, don't worry about it, Guy--excuse me, sir,

but I always think of Guy Harrington up in Iowa when I look at you. But only get me out of this dreadful place, I would so hate to die here." And Harry struggled to his feet and leaning heavily on Cal tried to walk out, but took only two steps and sank down weakly exclaiming:

"Guess I can't make it. You will have to leave me here to die alone; but do me one more favor please, write to my mother and Floy, away up in dear old Iowa."

Before he had finished speaking, Cal had hurried off and Harry, whose last hope fled with Cal's retreating form, gave up with a piteous moan for friends.

Ah, if old Dr. Osborne could have seen him, he would have taken him in his arms and borne him swiftly to a place of refuge. If Mapleton could have known!

"Please, sir, will you help me remove a sick boy to my buggy?" said Cal to one of the wardens whom he fancied had a kinder face than the others.

"If you want the cussed Yankee out you can get him, but I don't soil my hands with any of them!" came the flat refusal.

"I will aid you, sir," said a tall commanding young man who still wore the uniform of a Confederate officer. "I went through the whole war but I hope I have some humanity left; it seems that these men who have never seen a battle have lost all pity or even politeness. No wonder our cause was lost; it was a just judgment sent on us for tolerating the cruelties practiced in this place."

As he spoke, he and Cal made their way across the field on human skeletons.

"I'm afraid you will never succeed in getting him over this fever," he said bending over Harry and feeling his pulse. "He is very weak and only a boy, too. Is he a friend of yours, or why do you select him from among so many?"

"He saved my life once; that's the reason he is here, too," replied Cal. "'Twas at McAllister, I was wounded in the thigh and would have bled to death had he not saved me; and while he was yet with me a wagon came out taking in the wounded and they compelled him to go into camp as a prisoner, then hurried him with a few others off here. I begged for him but 'twas no use. I came here, a week ago, when the prisoners were released, I found him, and he knew me. My father is so prejudiced that, never until this morning, would he consent to have him brought to our house, and he did so very reluctantly then; though the scheme was warmly championed by my mother, who came with me once to see him."

"Well, well!" said the other, interested in the story, "he is a noble fellow and deserves a hearty welcome from your father."

They had taken him between them and borne him to the buggy; their words seemed to be meaningless to him but he kept his eye, with a cold fixed stare, upon the young officer, never speaking until, when they had passed the huge gates, Cal told him he was "out of prison now!"

"Oh, thank you, Gen. T—!" he said, smiling at the Confederate officer; "I knew you'd take me out or kill every rebel here!"

Then he went on talking strangely about riding "Old Yaller" home, and about "Floy and mother."

"He's delirious and must have medical aid soon or it will be too late," said the Confederate officer. "You take him on to your home and I'll see a doctor and send him up; only give me your address." Cal wrote the address, and then with Harry curled snugly upon the feather-bed, bid good-bye to his humane helper and started for home.

Mrs. Ashley was one of those even-tempered, though strong women, who are always the same, but who rule unconsciously both over themselves and those they influence. When the news of the emancipation of the slaves had come and, on every hand, they were leaving their former masters, Samuel Ashley had been in a fury and, declaring that his property was his own and should not leave his plantation, had brought out his weapons of punishment to argue the case; though he seldom used any.

His wife had shown him the utter uselessness of such resistance after the edict had gone forth; shown him the question had two sides and told him "he had always ruled by kindness, and now he must hold his men in the same humane way; for the sight of a whip would drive every one from the plantation."

He was determined to try his own plan first, and did so, only to find that the next morning after his threats, half the negroes had escaped while the bolder ones had waited until daylight, with the determined vow, "If marse teches one ob us we'll take ebery hoss on de place an' lick him besides." He then saw how powerless were his threats, for the negroes knew, as well as himself, that they were free.

Then Mrs. Ashley had said: "Let me try now."

And soon she was going from cabin to cabin with fair promises made in her patient persuasive tones, which wrung sobs and tears from them as they declared:

"Wes' guine ter stay right heah wid you, missus, jest as long as eber you lives, but marse hab got to put dem lickers away an' neber bring 'em back wid 'em freats; an' he's got to 'spose of dem dah hounds or we'll 'spose of dem fur him." But she had won them, and so they hired the negroes to stay.

She scarcely ever clashed with her husband, but when Calhoun, their only child, had pleaded for permission to bring the sick Union boy to his own home, he had met with a decided "No; no Yank on my place!" from his father; and Mrs. Ashley's persuasive tones and pleading words had failed to change the decision. Later Mrs. Ashley had taken some knickknacks, and gone with Calhoun to see Harry. When she came back she was firmly determined to bring the boy out and told her husband so.

That was on the day before the breakfast-table talk, Mr. Ashley made an indignant remonstrance, then fell into a sullen mood and scarcely noticed either Mrs Ashley or Calhoun during the evening. But Mrs. Ashley wouldn't drop the subject, and finally exacted the reluctant permission, though he thought they would not do it.

Mrs. Ashley felt she was right, and never wavered for a moment; so as soon as Cal started for Andersonville, she began arranging for the comfort of the boy who had saved her son's life at the risk of his own. The house was both elegant and commodious, with parlors above and below, richly furnished.

"I think we'll fix the north parlor bedroom, upstairs, for him, girls," said Mrs. Ashley. "He'll like the room on the north; it is warm enough any time and cooler in the heat of the day; then I know he will like the northern breeze; it will make him think of home, and it will make him well sooner." The two negro girls were to receive extra pay from Mrs Ashley's own purse for the work that day, and they threw themselves into it with a vim that made Mrs. Ashley say to herself:

"'Tis better to hire than to drive; why, those girls will do twice the work and do it neater, and quicker than when it was compulsory!"

Soon the bed had been aired, robed in white, wheeled out into the center of the wide room, which was swept and dusted, fresh water put into the pitcher, a clean towel on the roller, the curtains partly drawn to make a subdued light. Cal's mother plucked her choicest flowers with her own hands, into a rich bouquet and placed it upon the marble-top stand by the bed-side, with some choice books. "He is only a boy," she said softly, as she added here and there a pretty touch. "And perhaps his mother would do the same for Cal. At any rate, I will arrange for him as if for the president of the Southern Confederacy himself; for he saved Calhoun's life and that is enough to find the tender spot in my heart! Poor boy! he has not slept in a bed nor seen the inside of a parlor for a long dreary time."

The bed was but ready when Cal drove in front of the veranda and called for help.

Mrs. Ashley and the two negro girls came, since all the hands were in the field, and helped carry into the

great chamber of the Southern house, Harry, who chattered like a magpie, much to the amusement of the negro girls, but to Mrs. Ashley's deep concern, for the case was more serious than she had feared.

"Now, Cal," said she, when Harry laughed as they laid him between the clean sheets, saying, "Ah, mother you're a brick!" 'You give his hair a close cut and wash him from head to foot. I'll bring some of your clothes for him and that alone will help him, for those filthy rags are enough to make any one sick."

Soon his clothes were changed, his hair cut and he looked like a different boy from the one carried from the Andersonville prison; still, in the wild eyes and emaciated countenance, Mother Osborne would have scarcely recognized the bright, happy, healthy Harry who made their own home ring in the glad days.

The change made no difference in Harry, mentally; for the excitement and worry had been too much for his worn-out body and mind, and in random speeches he talked of home, his mother and father; then of school, of Floy and Guy; then, at the head of an army of soldiers, he would give commands; the next moment he would burst out crying and talk of some one crossing the dead-line, or suffering some other cruelty in the prison.

'Twas indeed a sad sight, and when Samuel Ashley came in to dinner, his two dozen hands having gone to their quarters, he went upstairs to see Calhoun on business, and saw the pitiable sight of the young, fine face pale and wan, that tossed and rolled upon the pillow; he went down with a sad look on his face. He was somewhat changed in his opinion, too, for, be-

fore dinner was over, he asked in a very mild tone:

"Has the doctor seen that sick boy yet?"

"No, but we're looking for him every minute now," replied Mrs. Ashley, kissing his brow. And he now felt that he was repaid, even if some of the neighbors did snub him for keeping a sick Yankee at his house.

"He's a fine-looking lad. I didn't know they had such faces as his up North; I thought they were an ignorant-looking set. And I'll wager my crop of cotton that his parents were originally from the South; for he looks just like a true Southern blood or I'm no judge!"

After dinner the doctor came, left medicine, and orders for all but Calhoun to stay out of the room when the patient was awake.

Mr. Ashley observed the doctor's directions about quiet and strange faces, never going into the sick-room when Harry was awake; though always inquiring about him whenever coming into the house; and when Harry was sleeping he would invariably stand in the door and watch, intently, the tossing head.

"Your father seems to have changed in his opinion of the young Union soldier," remarked the mother.

"Yes," replied Cal, "and the more I see and know of the Union soldiers, the more I'm inclined to believe that they were not so tyrannical as some of our leaders would have us believe. The doctor was just telling me to-day that the young officer who helped me that day was himself a prisoner for eight months in Washington, and was never treated better in his life. He declared if he had known how the Northern prisoners were being treated, or rather mis-treated, he would

never have taken up arms again in defence of such cruelty. I believe father would lose much of his prejudice 'gainst the North if he had seen as much of the Northen soldiers as I have. I hate to say so much about the war and its effects; of course I wish the Confederate cause had triumphed; and father takes the loss of his slaves so hard. But I thought, on the day when father said 'how like a true Southerner the sick soldier looks,' that if he had seen Sherman's army he would have thought that many of them were true Southern bloods and he would have admired them in spite of holding opposite opinions, for they looked like a band of heroes! And say, mother, did you know I almost wanted to join them myself as they marched by with the Stars and Stripes, and I thought of the flag which had always laid in my trunk since I was twelve years old and took it as a a prize for best 4th of July declamation. The cause of the stars and bars was a worthy one, though, but I don't believe the whole North is base and ignorant."

The twelfth morning after Harry had been brought to the planter's home, Cal awoke from a good night's sleep, having been disturbed only by the alarm clock which, at regular intervals, called him to give the sick soldier medicine. The sun was shining brightly and its beams fell straight across the room through the east window; outside he could hear the darkeys talking to each other, and to their teams, as they started for the cotton fields. Cal had almost forgotten his patient, and closed his eyes again, not to sleep, but to think over the great changes the few years of conflict had wrought.

"A few years ago," he thought, "those men scarcely dared to speak; instead of the sounds I now hear, was the hoarse, gruff voice of the overseer, 'Hurry there, boys, all hands hurry!' or threats at one of the darkeys if he failed to do his level best."

He was suddenly roused from his reverie by a puzzled:

"Where am I?" There sat the sick soldier looking about him for a moment, then laying down exhausted, while Cal yet looked at him.

"Hello, there! You're coming around all right; I knew you'd pull through, but you've been mighty sick," said Cal. "You know me, dont you?"

"I thought at first it was Guy, but it's the Confederate soldier—yes I know, but—"

"You must not talk; 'twould give you a set-back, you know," said Cal. And he explained to him where he was, how he came there and when. But he had hard work to make Harry believe that he had not seen Gen. T—, and been all along in his own bed at home.

"Yes, now I remember that some one told me," said Harry, "that the war was over and that I was not a prisoner any longer; but the next minute I saw old Wirz again with his gun raised to shoot some poor fellow who thought he saw some way to escape, or who deliberately walked over that dead-line that his spirit, at least, might be free. Then I think I had a dream, and oh! I can never describe my feelings as I saw my mother, whom I thought brought me some nice things for dinner, but finally walked off and left me still in prison."

Here a sigh from the door-way attracted the two

pairs of eyes, Mrs. Ashley had been standing in the half-open door full two minutes, unperceived, but her great pity for the boy so far from the mother he dreamed of, and her joy at seeing his improved condition, quite overcame her self-control, and she gave vent to her feelings in a burst of sobs.

"He's much better, isn't he?" said Mrs. Ashley, as she and Cal went downstairs to get some breakfast for him.

"Yes; very much better. He is getting along in fine shape now; if we can only keep him from getting too anxious to go home; but he is wildly excited at the thought of going home and I'm afraid he will worry too much."

"Did he tell you where his home is?" asked Mrs. Ashley.

"Yes; he lives in Iowa, but he don't want us to write to his friends until he is ready to start. And, say, he has no sister 'Floy' as we supposed; but I think his eyes sparkled brighter as I asked him about 'Floy.'"

Breakfast was taken up, and Mrs. Ashley watched Harry eat it, with as much pride as if he had been her own boy.

"You'll soon be able to be up and around," said Mrs. Ashley, "if you will keep quiet until strength comes."

"Yes, I think I shall be able to start for Iowa in a few days and I'm very anxious; for, from what your son tells me, the other boys have been home now for two or three weeks. I know my mother must be wild with fright, for they never knew what become of me, I suppose. I saw one of my old school-mates the morning I was taken to prison, but they would not allow me

to speak to him, and he was exchanged that very day; he did'nt recognize me, I know, so couldn't take the word back home." And Harry's eyes lit up at the very thoughts, but he continued, in spite of Mrs. Ashley's admonitions:

"How can I ever repay you for your kindness and splendid care is what is troubling me now."

"There, not another word of that, for I value my son's life above all the trouble or money in the world. We are debtors to you, and will always be; for nothing could balance the prize you saved us, and saved at such a cost to yourself too; your doctor-bill is already paid, and as soon as you are able to travel, you shall have money to go home with; but don't mention pay or debt again. Don't be in too much of a hurry to go home; you will not be able to travel for many days yet. I think you had better allow us to write to your friends and that will relieve their anxiety." And Mrs. Ashley looked all she said.

Harry's heart was too full of joy and gratitude to allow his mouth to open for a time, "for," he said afterward, "if I had parted my lips, I think I should have sobbed like a child; I had to be very careful to choke back the big sobs that came into my throat."

"No, I must go as soon as possible; think, I've been away over four years! But I would rather they should not know I'm coming until I'm ready to start. We will write one day and I'll start the next so the letter will get in just one day ahead."

For five days they tried to keep Harry in bed and convince him he was sick; but it was like convincing a hungry man that he does not want to eat but to lie in bed.

"Well" said Harry one Saturday morning, "I want to start for Iowa, Monday, so if you will just mail a letter for me to day it will have two days the start of me."

Calhoun mailed the letter, but he and his mother put in that afternoon and most of Sunday in trying to persuade him not to start; but Harry could wait no longer, and Monday noon he bade good-bye to his Southern friends and stepped on board the coach which was bound direct for St. Louis.

He waved his hand to Calhoun and his mother as the train began to move faster and faster; they signaled to him in return and watched the train until the smoke of the engine had faded away into the blue sky, and the dull rumble sounded far off in the distance, not unlike other sounds that had been heard so recently in the South, which had been re-echoed in the sound of moans for the loved boys who would never board a homeward-board train.

CHAPTER XXVII

A GALA DAY AT MAPLETON

Mapleton was indeed a happy place. Mike McGuire declared that "their roosters crowed oftener, the turkeys strutted bigger and gobbled louder since pa had come home." Mike had used a homely illustration, but expressed a truth worth knowing, that happiness lies not in the things about us but in us. Pat and his six "leetle fellers" actually thought the fowls looked prettier and trilled gladder notes in their song, than was their custom. Just as Miller Wells declared that the old mill had a merrier sound since Clarke was its engineer again; and Clarke himself loved to listen to its busy buzz and whirr, with a satisfied smile, thinking of the new firm-name painted on the outside—"Wells & Son."

Mrs. Edwards thought that the "world was going better;" and Hannah Edmonds declared that Jack thought twice as much of her since he was married than he ever did before, and that Mame was the "nicest gal in that ere town and smartest too." It was indeed an era of good feeling; the birds sang sweeter, the band discoursed better music, since happy hearts fitted the words; the very rustle of the leaves which had seemed a discordant murmur of dread tidings, now seemed a sweet lullaby.

But for Mr. and Mrs. Osborne life had lost its charm,

and though they tried to conceal their grief, it was eloquently told in their sorrow-stricken faces.

The smile that used to play around the doctor's mouth had disappeared, and a wrinkle remained to show where it had been; the sharp twinkle in his eye had been washed away by tears. His joking had stopped suddenly, and the hearty laugh that once shook his huge form was more subdued and scarcely ever heard. His home and his patients consumed his whole time and attention, with visits to Grace, Will and the babies, as his sole enjoyment.

Mrs. Osborne's face had taken on a look of patient resignation which half-revealed, half-concealed the track of suffering, while 'twas crowned with silvery hair.

There was another who felt as deeply the wound of that war as any; and though seemingly happy at times, she had the same old restless longing as before the boys came home. Floy enjoyed Will, but he only filled his own place. Her father had never seemed so dear to her until they began to roll the clods down on the coffin lid; and she thought she cared no more for Harry Osborne than any other school-mate, until that dreadful letter brought the tidings, "Harry was missing at roll;" and when the boys came off the train with their bright uniform and still brighter smiles, she had felt more keenly than ever the absence of that one who had asked her to say "she was sorry" he was going to the war.

"Oh, if I could but see him now, I would tell him that I was sorry then, and have been for four years!" she said to herself for the hundreth time, as

she walked slowly down the road to the postoffice.

"Why do I still go down to the office every day? He will never come! No; never! But it is putting in the time; I can't read, and must do something." The train was not in yet, but she sauntered on, looking ever and anon to see if the smoke was rising above the clump of trees far up the bend.

The cars have come and gone; the mail is being distributed when suddenly the delivery door is opened with.

"Doctor Osborne! Doctor Osborne! Here's a letter from Andersonville, Georgia!"

The doctor was not there; but, without thinking, Floy snatched it from him and was on the verge of opening it; but stopped, gave one hasty excited look about her and darted out of the office, while the crowd peered anxiously after her. The old postmaster, who had held the office for years and had never been accused of meddling with any one's mail, but had earned and bore the name of "Old Business," was now quite anxious to know what a letter addressed to Doctor and Mrs. Osborn post-marked "Andersonville, Georgia" contained; he stopped his work of distribution—a thing never done in his life before—and stood at the delivery window to discuss the possibility of Harry being still alive and that letter being from him.

"It is hardly probable, yet possible, that Harry is still living," said Capt. Edwards. "If it was anybody but Harry, I would say there was not the shadow of a chance, but he's had so many narrow escapes! he seemed to have a charmed life. If he should have been taken prisoner he would have slipped out, or

got on the good side of some of the guards, and been heard from before this; but one can't tell—that letter holds the secret, evidently. There was not a private or officer in our regiment that had so many warm friends as Harry Osborne!"

"That's all very nice to put in words, about his getting on the good side of some of the guards at Andersonville; but the human being who ever saw the good side of old Wirz or any of his helpers has a keener eye for good than I have, and I spent a whole year there," said Clarke Wells, looking sadly into space as if he could see the horrors of Andersonville pictured on the very air.

Floy forgot she was no longer a little girl, but a dignified graduate of the high school, and ran every step of the way to the Osborne home.

"Oh, Mrs. Osborne, Mrs. Osborne!" she cried, rushing into the sitting-room where Mrs. Osborne sat dressing a doll for Gwen; "Here, open this letter quick; I know it's from Harry!" Mrs. Osborne clutched the letter Floy pushed into her uplifted hand, but didn't open it. The shock had been too much for Mrs. Osborne's tried nerves, and she sank upon the floor with, "Oh, God; can it be possible?" and fainted.

"Why didn't I have some thought about me?" cried Floy, more excited than ever, chafing the cold hands.

"I have killed her! oh why didn't I think?" Then she remembered having seen the doctor drive to the barn as she came down, and ran to call him.

Joy seldom kills, and Mrs. Osborne soon opened her eyes to ask, "Is it true? Harry!" Doctor Osborne had already torn open the letter as he spoke.

"From Harry, yes—oh thank God!" and while Floy and Mrs. Osborne listened breathlessly, he read the message from Harry himself.

"I will be home on Thursday," the doctor read after telling where he was and how he came there.

"Thursday!" repeated Floy—"To-morrow! Oh—" and again she darted away as quickly as she had from the postoffice. She didn't run this time though; but tried with all her might to curb her excitement, as she walked briskly toward the cottage. With burning cheeks, and flashing eyes she repeated "To-morrow, to-morrow!"

Then she thought of the scene under the elms when Harry wanted her to say she was sorry; saw him again as he bravely marched away in the company; pictured in part the many scenes through which he had passed since then; and now he was coming back home!

"Oh, I'll tell him I'm glad he came back, even if I wouldn't say I was sorry when he went away. But how changed he will be," she said; "still he's just a boy yet for he was but fifteen then."

Then she hummed a bit of a song, as she examined the medal again, whispering, "wear it till I come." and trying to discern which one of the tiny figures among the trees was Harry. But she dropped the beautiful treasure in its place again when she saw Guy coming down.

"Guy, Harry is coming to-morrow!" she called, trying to speak unconcernedly, but her voice had a glad ring in it. Guy stood spell-bound.

"What! Harry—Harry Osborne?" he almost gasped. "Alive? coming home to-morrow? you're joking,

Floy!" and Guy stepped across to Floy, who still went slowly down the grass-embroidered side-walk.

"Wait," he said, in an impatient tone, "How do you know he's coming, are you sure?"

"Yes, his mother just received a letter from him, written at a planter's house near Andersonville, last Saturday. He said he had been sick but would start Monday and would get here Thursday, that's to-morrow."

Guy stood a full minute gazing intently at the side-walk, then raised his eyes to Floy's with a look which puzzled her, but not so much as his words, "May be he won't come though, yet."

His face turned pale and Floy noticed that his lips quivered painfully.

"Why, Guy Harrington!" she said in quick surprise, "You spoke as if you did not want him to come home! I thought you would be jubilant over this news!"

Again he was silent for several embarrassing seconds, then said:

"I'm glad Harry is living; but I am not glad—how could I be?—that he's coming back here!"

"Why, Guy, what makes you talk and act like this!" and Floy looked both puzzled and grieved. "I thought everybody in Mapleton would rejoice at the good news, and especially you, for you were always Harry's best friend;" and Floy's cheeks burned scarlet.

"Floy, you know why I don't want Harry to come back here, and you know, too, that if he does come, it will make me miserable forever!" Guy was calmer now, but still as white as Floy's apron, and he gave Floy

such a strange look, half-piteous, half-fierce—that her own big gray eyes drooped under it.

"Guy Harrington," she said, "you're not the man I thought you were! What do you mean? I am bewildered—shocked at such talk about the coming of an old school-chum from Andersonville!" and Floy turned coolly away.

"Well," said Guy, "would you be shocked if I should tell you in plain words, what I have been telling you for years in every action toward you—that I love you!—will always love you? Harry Osborne will do just as Jack Riley and John Edwards have done, be married in two weeks after he gets home, and you will be his wife!" Guy's bitter tone was pitiable, but Floy felt too keenly the injustice he was doing Harry to think of pity now.

"Guy, you forget yourself," she said haughtily, "you speak at random. How do you know that Harry Osborne cares for me more than for any other schoolmate? You are quite prophetic. Would you be traitor enough to take advantage of his absence if he did? especially when he is absent on such a mission as his has been?"

"To the first question I answer, I know it by the letters he has written to you, which you yourself have shown me; I know it by that medal you have worn so constantly for two years and a half!" Guy spoke defiantly, "To the second, yes; I would win you at any cost, with the sacrifice of anything or anybody. Don't you know the old saying, 'All is fair in love and war?' You yourself praise the men who have been using all manner of strategem in the war lately."

"It seems that you have been trying the love part of the adage, if your pretended friendship toward Harry and brotherly conduct toward me, has aimed at something else than true friendship!" and Floy hurried on toward Elm Cottage; for already the streets down town were being dotted with groups of men, and she knew if she did not make haste Will and Grace would be the last of anyone in town to hear the good news.

Guy went on and joined a group who were talking it over. His face still showed the emotion he felt, but no one guessed the feelings which prompted it; for if any one noticed a difference in him they attributed it to his excitement over the news from his old chum.

Floy started at a brisk gait, but gradually slackened her pace while her thoughts ran forward, backward, and sifted the facts she'd been learning.

"Why must I always have some trouble?" she thought. "Here I was so glad about Harry, and am still, but why couldn't Guy keep his place, and be glad, too? I always liked Guy—he's been a splendid friend. But I never dreamed of his caring for me differently than for the other girls. But now I do remember lots of actions and words which were not for a sister, or girl-chum. I guess he has shown me more favors than to any other girl in town during the last three years. But he didn't need to, I didn't intend he should and did not encourage any sentiment. I may have given him some encouragement seemingly, but I never meant it that way! Oh, dear! I've had so much to worry me all the time! Why couldn't he have said something before this, that I might have seen what he meant and treated him differently. I could never love Guy that

way; could have never been more to him than I am, even if Harry—" a deep blush o'erspread her face at the remembrance of Guy's words, "Harry will do as Jack Riley and John Edwards have done, be married in two weeks!" "I hate to see Guy in trouble, but it isn't just the thing for him to say this now!" Elm Cottage gate was swung open now, and she bounded up the walk and into the house, shouting:

"Good news! good news! guess, guess!" Aunt Polly dropped her bunch of garden-seeds, drew her spectacles down on her nose and peered over them straight into Floy's bright face.

Grace's face changed color half a dozen times in that many seconds, but what she was thinking of was too good, she would not guess anything else, and was afraid to guess that. Will instinctively laid Grant in his cradle that he might have one arm to wave if his guess be true. Then coming very close up to Grace he said:

"I guess that Harry is coming home!"

"Right, right! To-morrow, to-morrow!" exclaimed Floy, more excited if possible than when she herself, had first heard the news. Will did not wave his hand as he expected he should do, but clasped Grace instead, who laughed and cried together. 'Twas a merry time at Elm Cottage, the babies were each kissed half a dozen times by everyone. Aunt Polly laughed till she cried, and almost forgot that Harry was not her son.

In a few minutes, Will and Grace were on their way down to "father Osborne's" where they found Capt. Edwards, Judge Burton and a number of other promi-

nent citizens, congratulating the Osborne parents and planning for the welcome, that John declared "should be the grandest day that Mapleton ever knew.'

The rest of the evening and most of the night was spent in preparing for the morrow. Several boys were sent out in different directions to rally the soldiers in the surrounding country. Guy was one of those who volunteered to go, and just as the moon came up, away he went, easing his conscience a little; for Floy's words of "traitor to your friend" had cut; and he went about reminding the country-folks of the story of Paul Revere; but 'twas a gladder message he brought.

Next morning, the streets began to fill with an enthusiastic crowd of men and boys, among whom were many in blue uniforms. All the forenoon, the number swelled, as the soldiers came to welcome their old friend and comrade, and the country-folks from as far as the news was spread, came in to see the soldiers march and hear the band play its stirring national airs.

The folks from Elm Cottage came down early to the Osborne house, where the soldiers were to form in line and march to the depot. Promptly at two P. M. all were ready; Col. Morris modestly declining to command, Capt. Edwards, as of old, went at the head of Co. F.

At the Osborne place, Guy found opportunity to speak with Floy. He told her he was sorry he had talked to her as he had on the day before; that he should have guarded his secret and not blamed Harry. But he added, "I love you, Floy; I will always love you as Floy Morris; but after you are married I will try to only respect you as Mrs. Harry Osborne."

"I wish you would not talk so, Guy," said Floy, coloring highly. "It strikes me you are rather premature in bestowing that high-sounding title upon any one."

"It will come," he said sadly, but added determinedly: "It was selfishness which prompted me to say what I did yesterday; true love tells me that if Harry is preferred you would be happier with him. I'm glad Harry is coming, I will welcome him heartily. But, Floy, will you keep my secret and will you still hold me as a friend?"

"Yes, to both questions, and now I must go; for I see they are all ready to march, and I am to go with the home-folks."

'Twas a beautiful June day, and Floy quite rivaled it in brightness in her graduating-dress with forget-me-nots for flowers; her gold pin, her father's present, and the necklace and medal, her ornaments. Guy watched the graceful figure make its way to the home-group and sighed, with Whittier's judge, only he said, "I wish it might have been!"

"Shoulder arms! March!" was the sharp command of Capt. Edwards.

Silence fell among the spectators, and only the steady "tramp, tramp, tramp!" of the perfectly drilled soldiers was heard for some seconds, then, at the keen whistle of a fife, the band began to play, and a rousing cheer went up from the spectators, not unlike the one the soldiers themselves had given at the surrender of Fort McAllister where Harry was first missing.

This might have appropriately been called "flag day" if the number would have suggested the name; for, from every house they flapped, and everyone car-

ried one, from Pat McGuire, Jr., who bore a strawberry-stained flag of miniature size, to Col. Will Morris, who marched in front with the old tattered flag which Mother Osborne had never allowed from Harry's picture before.

Half an hour before the train was due, the procession reached the depot, and from the highest points of stables near by, from piles of ties, and even from half-way up the nearest telegraph poles, were boys from six to sixteen watching for the first glimpse of the engine, as it should come from behind the clump of trees. that Aunt Polly vowed she'd cut out if she was a man.

Finally, after they had waited for—"a half day" Aunt Polly said, though in fact the train was a few minutes ahead of time, the smoke suddenly shot up, the signal that the "iron horse" would soon dash into their midst.

All eyes were instinctively turned toward Doctor and Mrs. Osborne. Mother Osborne stood by Grace perfectly calm, though expectant; for the thought of some possible accident detaining Harry had never entered her mind. Doctor Osborne seemed quite self-possessed until the smoke told him that it was but a minute or two now; then the color left his face, and he hastened round among the friends charging them not to get excited, while he, himself, usually so calm and steady-nerved, trembled from head to foot.

"Kape cool, docthor! Kape cool, docthor," shouted Pat, "or ye'll skeer the enjun off its beat, sure!"

The train nears the station, and on the platform of the car stands the conductor with a here-I-am-

and-what-do-you-want-of-me expression on his face.

The band struck up "Hail to the Chief;" and the mischievous conductor took off his cap, smiled, as only fat railroad men can with any degree of perfection, bowed low, and bawled out in his "All-aboard" voice, "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen!"

Some caught the joke and laughed; but soon looked away, for the words were scarce finished when out bounded Harry Osborne and started for the little group with:

"Mother, mother!"

The next instant his father and mother had both clasped him in their arms. The band forgot that its business was to play, and stood gazing. The passengers and railroad men looked from every door and window. And Aunt Polly, blessed, patriotic, old Aunt Polly, "capped the climax" by grabbing the tattered old flag that Harry had defended so bravely, and shaking it over the heads of the parents and son as they wept together, shouting:

"Long may it wave, o'er the son that is free and the heads of the brave!"

This was the signal for a universal cheer, and it seemed as if each man and boy there was vieing with every other for the championship of the world on loud hallooing. The ladies did not cheer in words, but they did with kerchiefs, which they waved above their heads half the time and with which they wiped away the tears the other half.

Doctor and Mrs. Osborne to-day can scarcely be recognized as the heart-broken couple, who, three weeks ago, came down to help welcome home the returning

heroes, came, trying to smile, though their tears would come. To-day none are happier than they, though they get back only one of the two sons who went at their country's call.

After his parents had released him, Grace came next, and it was even a more affecting meeting. Harry sobbed like a child now, for he thought of Clay, now sleeping many hundred miles away in the same long grave with many of his comrades, and how they two had been children together and played merrily around their parents' knee.

Floy could not explain or understand her feelings as she stood aloof and gazed at him.

"Why, is it Harry?" she questioned herself. "He was but a boy when he went away, four years ago, and now he is a man! How pale and wan he is, poor Harry!"

But she could not make it seem real that the healthy, square-built, rosy boy, of four years ago, was the tall, pale, bony-faced man. Then she recalled Guy's prophecy and her cheeks burned crimson.

Now the band is in position again, Captain Edwards gives command, the soldiers wheel into line. At the signal every third man fires; then every second, and just as the echo of it dies away every first fires the last of the three salutes. "March!" "Stack arms!" is ordered

The soldiers march in two and two, branching to the right and left, as they had so recently seen Joe E. Johnston's army do. Then they file past Harry, each one of them shaking hands with him heartily, the band playing "Home, Sweet Home." When the

soldiers had passed, the crowd came surging, each anxious to express in some way his joy at his coming. The hand-shaking which threatened to wring Harry's right arm off was, fortunately, ended by Judge Burton mounting a platform temporarily constructed, and in a few well-chosen words welcoming the "pride of the 7th Iowa" back as a citizen.

The cries of "Harry!" "Harry!" "Harry!" from every part of the assembly were too strong to be resisted; and almost borne by two soldiers, he ascended the platform.

For several seconds, the cheering was deafening, then Harry in his glad, though much-excited way, responded to the Judge's welcome and thanked the people for their warm reception, ending with:

"You have no reason to call me 'The pride of the 7th Iowa,' though I think, perhaps, you might call me the Bonaparte of the regiment!"

Then they escorted him to the doctor's buggy awaiting him, and putting him in front of the procession, marched to the tune of "Marching through Georgia" to the dear old home.

And now the boys had all returned who ever would return.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HARRY AND FLOY

"Now, Mrs. Osborne, you just stay right in the parlor and enjoy Harry. Grace will help me if I need any assistance; but I know your pantry and cellar too well to need any," said Floy, as she followed Mrs. Osborne to the kitchen, half an hour after Harry had reached home.

"No, Floy, you couldn't find half the things; we tried to get everything ready last night and this morning, but we were too much excited to put things away orderly. You run back and visit, Floy; we'll have him quite to ourselves this evening."

But neither could persuade the other to leave the kitchen, so both went flying about preparing for Harry his first supper at home.

The crowd had dispersed at Doctor Osborne's gate, after they had seen Harry enter his childhood's home amid cheers, smiles and tears from the lookers-on. But they didn't see the look in the large blue eyes as they fell on the familiar objects, nor the tears that fell unchecked from them at sight of Clay's picture in the parlor; but his glad whisper "Home!" had a thrilling ring in it and he joyfully threw himself upon the familiar couch his father wheeled out for him, while he laughed and chatted as if trying to make up for some of the silent dreary hours just over.

The scattering people all carried with them the picture of that meeting; of Harry's pale, haggard face and shining eyes. And everywhere he was the subject of conversation; not a few predicting that in the near future Col. Morris would be his double brother-in-law.

"Wouldn't it be a shame if that girl would go back on him for Guy Harrington!" said Capt. Edwards to his wife, as they walked arm in arm down to the old home Lois had left so lately.

"No danger. Not a bit of danger," said Lois, "she almost worships Harry, and I noticed that his eyes never stopped until they rested on her at the depot."

"Of course, he never thinks of anybody but Floy. But you can't tell about girls," and John quite ignored the "Ahem!" Lois gave. "She and Guy had a long talk yesterday, and to-day just before starting for the depot. Floy acted strangely shy for her; why, I thought she treated Harry coldly. Every other one of his old school-friends talked longer to him and shook hands with more vim than Floy," and John actually looked hurt o'er this seeming slight of his old comrade.

"She probably felt a little timid in this public meeting, knowing everybody was watching her. I know I was scared nearly to death when you came home," laughed Lois; "just wait until they are alone and she'll surrender at once, as I did, and be married in two weeks." And Lois looked so mischievously at John that he declared he had a notion to kiss her, even if the streets were lined with pedestrians.

"Well, I hope she will, if Harry wants to settle down—I rather pity him, though; he's so young to

become a martyr to a woman's 'sweet will.' But he faced the rebs right along with the rest of us, and may be he can stand it," said John. Then he added seriously: "But, Lois, I don't like the way she treated Harry, and I don't like the way she talks to Guy."

"What if she did prefer Guy to Harry? There isn't a better young man in the country, except you—he's intellectual too, will become quite learned, and I think he would make Floy quite a good, suitable husband." And Lois, with a merry twinkle in her eye which John did not fail to see, looked across to the high school building.

"Oh, you think you'll tease me a little over the professor, do you? You can't do that now, for I've got the papers for you now, and if I didn't have them, you'd want me to get them, at once.'

"Of course I would, and you'd do it too;" and Lois slipped her hand down his arm and gave his hand such a loving little squeeze that John thought he was the happiest man in the world.

But he was neither happier nor prouder than Jack Riley, who, at that moment was driving up the road in the wagon behind his span of bays, with merry little Mame on one side, looking first at Jack and then at some passer-by, at whom she would bow and smile a "didn't-I-get-the-finest-man-in-the-world" smile, while on the other side sat Hannah, with her nose about two degrees higher than when she drove old Dobbins, and one higher than anv ordinary person, in moderate circumstances.

"Supper is now ready in camp," said Mother Osborne at the kitchen door.

Will and Harry laughed at the idea of any one announcing supper in the army where every one was his own cook and dish-washer. Grace, who had never been known to allow her mother to get the supper before when she was about, took Grant from Will, while Harry led Gwen to supper.

Floy sat down, by chance, opposite to Harry; but she was not a particle hungry and could have kissed dear baby Grant for fretting and thus giving her an excuse to leave. The blue eyes opposite her would bring the color to her cheek, in some unaccountable manner, so she took Grant and slipped off into the sitting-room.

She gave Grant a toy over which he crowed quite merrily while she restlessly wandered about the room, now poring o'er a book, now examining the tattered flag closely, as she had often done before; finally, she took off the gold medal and gave it a long, scrutinizing look.

"He has come now. I was only to wear it until he came! I wonder how I'd better give it back to him; of course he'll want it to wear for a watch-charm, and 'twill be a splendid one for it means so much!" she thought, as she turned it fondly over, again and again. "I don't want him to have to ask me for it." And she laid it on the table, quickly turning away as she remembered Guy's "nonsense."

All the while she had lent half her attention to the table-talk, and now she went to the door to listen to Harry's story about the Ashleys. The subject had been suggested by Harry taking from his lunch basket the remnant of a delicious cake which Mrs. Ashley had baked for his journey.

After supper the Morrises soon took leave for the night—all except Gwen, whom Harry would persist in keeping with him his first evening at home.

"Floy," exclaimed Will, as she tripped on in front of the rest with U. S. Grant in her arms, "What's the matter with you? Last night you were jubilant as any one in town over Harry's coming, and now that he has come you treat him decidedly cool. You surely are not trying to put on airs—trying to play 'grown up folks' with Harry. You're lots nicer when you act perfectly natural."

"Now, you know I wasn't putting on airs! I thought I was quite sociable; why, I helped to get his first supper!" and Floy colored, but in the dark they did not notice it.

"Now, see here, puss, you know you treated Harry shabbily; and I know that all the girls and boys at the station noticed it, especially Guy. He smiled when you only gave Harry one hand, when many of the girls gave him two, and acted glad to see him."

Neither Aunt Polly nor Grace made any comments; but Floy knew by Grace's face that she, too, felt that Harry's welcome was scarcely complete.

The others did the complaining, but Floy felt more than any one that a barrier had sprung up between herself and the young soldier.

"Pshaw!" she said, when once alone, thinking it over; "I am so glad to get him home again, I had intended treating him so well, giving him such a welcome that he would know I had missed him all the time! But somehow every one had their eyes on me, and I knew if I only treated him as the others did that

they would talk and talk, just as they did over John and Lois. But there's no use to worry and make wrinkles over it. He got a hearty reception and I dare say didn't notice I was a little stiff. Anyhow we'll be together before three days and 'twill come out all right, I know."

In the meanwhile, Harry was resting on his mother's bed which he declared was softer, if possible, than Mrs. Ashley's, asking questions and watching Gwen playing. "Why, Harry, here is your medal, or Floy's—did you give it to her?" his mother asked, looking at him closely.

Harry was evidently puzzled over its being there; for he took the medal and gazed steadily at it a long time, while Gwen called continually, "Dat my Foy's!" "Dat my Foy's!"

"Where did you get it, mother?" he asked presently.

"Lying on the table, back where little hands could not reach it."

Harry was much surprised. Of course Floy had left it purposely, then; for he had noticed that she wore it at the depot and later at the supper-table.

"Well! I thought I understood Floy like a book. But the little girl is a mystery—I like mysteries like her, though!" he thought, gazing hard at the wall; "What *could she mean?* Oh, I guess I see! I told her in the letter I sent with the medal, to wear it until I came. Now she has done so, and has left it off at my coming to tease me, the little mischief. Hasn't she changed though? I never saw such a fine face—a beauty, too. Well, you shall wear it again, Floy. She treated me strangely; I noticed she watched me

a great deal, but she was so shy about it that I scarcely got to see her full in the eyes all the time. I wonder if she is as greatly surprised at the change in my appearance as I in hers? When I went away she was a sweet, rosy-cheeked girl of thirteen, now she is a graceful, dignified young lady. Her cheeks have faded some, but I noticed that, at times, the roses came back as of yore. And her eyes, big and gray as ever, have a sadder expression; why, they actually sparkled when she had solved some difficult problem in arithmetic or was getting off something witty! I do not wonder though, that she has grown pale and that her eyes have lost part of their luster, when I remember what she has passed through in these four bitter years; but the brilliancy will return when—"

He paused at the "when," then settled into a deeper study, quite unheeding Gwen who had put on Harry's cap, taken her grandpa's cane and with long steps, was walking up and down the room, saying, "Me do to meet my danpa's boy! Me do to meet my danpa's boy!"

The doctor and Mrs. Osborne smiled at her, and silently wondered what Harry was thinking. Finally, Mrs. Osborne repeated the question Harry had not heard:

"Did you give the medal to Floy, Harry, or just send it to her for a while?"

"Well, I can hardly tell whether I meant for her to keep it or not," said Harry, a little confused, "I guess I gave it to her just as I gave the flag to you—to keep, but not to claim."

"O yes, I understand now," said Mrs. Osborne,

with the nearest to a twinkle in her eyes, she had had for four years. "If you get *her*, she may keep the medal, but if not, you will keep it."

"Why, mother," said Harry, laughing but coloring, "I thought there was no doubt about that; I supposed you folks would have that all arranged."

The doctor shook his sides, as in the old days, at the jocular turn his wife was now taking.

"We thought we had, but somehow you two don't seem very enthusiastic over the plan, since you have seen one another. Floy was the wildest girl I ever saw until she met you; but she changed the moment she set her eyes on you!" laughed Mrs. Osborne. "But you just wait until you have frequented my pantry a few days and slept on my good beds, and those sunken cheeks will fill out, get more color, and she'll change her mind again." Mrs. Osborne had begun to think more seriously of the matter, from a look in Harry's face, and she added, after kissing him and stroking his white forehead, "A mother's love is the surest and best; I love you, even with the starvation-mark of that wretched butcher-shop pictured on your face!"

"Pshaw, mother!" said the doctor quickly, "that is unjust to intimate that Floy cares less for Harry because he is pale and emaciated. On the contrary, that very thing would call out kindlier feelings on her part."

"Then I guess I'll fast a while longer," said Harry laughingly. But the shrewd old doctor saw the blush which came, too, and went on extolling Floy's virtues, ending with:

"I want her for my daughter-in-law, and I'll give you as long to win her as John and Jack had. I'm sure you have as good a chance as either of them had, when they courted their wives."

Mrs. Osborne answered a knock at the door, just at this point, and Jack and Mame came in. It was a jolly meeting; all shook hands again, and Harry declared that he had a notion to kiss Jack's wife.

Mame dissuaded him, saying:

"If you do, Jack shall kiss your wife before three weeks!" For one hour they stayed, and 'twas one continual laugh from the time they came until they went away. Then Mame declared to Jack:

"Harry and Floy will make the happiest couple, except us, in this country." And the Osbornes decided that Mame and Jack were cut out for one another.

During the next two days, Harry "took in the town;" visited old friends, saw many of the old haunts, and it rather rested than tired him, as the doctor feared it might do. Most of the time, however, was spent at home with his mother and the friends who called there to see him. All his old school-mates had called, but Floy.

Guy was watching her manner toward Harry and was beginning to think he was not the formidable rival he feared he would be; he was quite elated at the state of affairs, particularly, since he himself had acted tolerably honorable.

The second evening after Harry's coming, Guy met Floy down town and casually remarked that "Harry's soldiering had changed his ways and manners as much as time had changed his face." He was surprised at

the look she gave him, and the words, with the manner in which Guy said them, revolutionized Floy's actions toward Harry quite as much as his "prophecy" had before the "gala day."

The next morning Harry came up to Elm Cottage, but had only reached the gate when he was met by, "Don't you want to go on a forage, soldier?" from Floy, as she came hastily down the walk.

"We never refuse a chance for something good to eat, especially, when one is to have a good partner; you know a great deal depends upon that."

"Well, I can't say that I will be a very good partner, but I'll promise that I won't *run* from friend or foe!" said Floy, looking defiantly mischievous. And Harry could not have said after this that he had not seen straight into Floy's eyes.

"Well, is this a forced march, a double-quick, or are you just trying to tire me out?" asked Harry, as they started across the meadow and Floy stepped on quickly.

"Neither, nor do I mean to break my promise to not run from friend or foe!" laughed Floy, taking a slower gait and stepping with him. "But, you see, we are getting ready for company to-morrow and mother wants some green apples in the *near* future."

And Floy twirled her bucket over and over her head like a school-boy just let out of school.

"Who are to be the favored ones, who are to eat the apple pie?" asked Harry.

"The 'Pride of the 7th Iowa' and the happy parents of the 'Bonaparte' of the same regiment," answered the bright-faced girl.

Nine o'clock came; Grace and Aunt Polly began to look across the meadow toward the old orchard, wondering anxiously why Floy didn't come. Ten o'clock came, but no Floy and no apples. Aunt Polly's patience was exhausted and she called:

"Will! Will! go to the old orchard and see what's the matter that she don't bring them apples. We oughter knowed she'd gather every flower she saw and pull it to pieces before ever she left the orchard! I'd be glad ef there wasn't any such thing as botany!"

Will was gone an unusually long time and when finally he came in sight again, no Floy was with him. Quite uneasy, they both went out to the gate to meet him. Their fears were soon allayed by his broad grin before he said:

"*Harry* is with Floy. I took the bucket from beneath the tree they sat under, and they were never aware of my presence."

"I never did see such a child!" said Aunt Polly, biting her lip to keep back the half-developed smile, and hurrying up the walk with the apples.

Will didn't "tell tales out of school," but Grace suspected that the little squeeze he gave her, as they went up the walk after Aunt Polly, was suggested by something he saw in the orchard.

The old wooden clock struck twelve, and Grace, on looking, saw the pair leisurely coming across the meadow. Soon all were at the window, laughing some of those good hearty laughs which make one feel good the rest of the day and bless the man who first invented the art. Floy carried her apron, and Harry his hat, full of green apples.

Aunt Polly remarked they must have been trying to make up in quantity the time they had lost; for they had several times the amount Floy went to gather.

Grace had always loved Floy like a real sister and had hoped that Harry would win her, if he was given back to them; but, since the day he came, Floy had puzzled her. She was even beginning to fear that Guy Harrington, as a '64, might be preferred to her darling brother, and she was accordingly interested in the pair coming through the gate.

Through the open window, she heard something that made her smile, and say to Will, "Its all right! Why anybody could have heard it," she added, as Will pretended surprise. She was only a woman, you know.

Grace was satisfied. She had heard Floy say: "Then, or now, if you say so; but that would be so jolly, it would even beat Jack and Mame." And Harry had answered: "Bless you, my little girl! I knew all the time that it was all right!"

They met them at the door feigning surprise at Floy's long absence, and Aunt Polly laughingly told them that two children like them did not "look so guilty for nothing."

The medal hung in its accustomed place, but Floy had not blushed so much over all the questions and comments together, as she did when Will took it from her chain and read the words, "For bravery," which had meant so much to Harry when he first looked at it.

"For bravery! For bravery!" quoted Will, "well, from what I saw I think she earned it. And Harry should have one of brass with the words 'He held his own!' on it."

Harry visited Elm Cottage frequently in the next few days and the villagers nodded their heads, knowingly; but not even Mame knew "the end thereof." Mame coaxed and chided; 'twas no use.

"Oh, Mame, if I'd make a confidant of you now, you would tell Jack the first hour you were with him. O no, Jack has the first place now!" had been Floy's laughing reply to Mame's—"Now, Floy, tell *me please.* I'm your confidant, you know!" on the evening before the Fourth.

No celebration had been so well planned as the one to take place on this 4th of July. Many would remember that of '63 with more sadness and many with more joy. The soldiers who had faced the "flower of Lee's veterans" as they marched over the fatal hill at Gettysburg, would never forget the bravery displayed by both blue and gray; they would never forget the sight which met their eyes, as with sad faces and heavy hearts they had gone over that, the bloodiest battle-field of the war.

The Mapleton boys will always remember how proud they all felt, after the long siege, as they marched through the streets of Vicksburg; how much encouraged they felt when the Confederate army, thirty thousand strong, laid down their flags and muskets to be granted their paroles; how they had laughed as they read at the head of a Vicksburg paper—printed by Union soldiers—"Grant has caught the rabbit, dined in the city of Vicksburg, and shut off the supply of mule-beef and fricasseed kitten."

Long before the farm-yard fowls began their merry songs, or the dark-blue sky in the east was streaked

by the purple morning light, the cannon pealed forth its "Boom! "Boom! "Boom!" and lit the houses near by with its bright flashes. One hundred shots were fired, but before the fourth of them had shaken the air, the soldiers of Mapleton were all out.

In the early morning, Will Morris walked down the road, drawing full deep breaths of home and free air; recalling memories both sweet and sad, inspired by the sight of the flags and the booms of the cannon.

A deep shadow o'ercast his face as he thought silently, and his eye involuntarily turned toward the churchyard; following his thoughts he turned his steps thither. The estrangement from his father was the bitterest thought connected with the past. The memory of the stirring scene four years ago to-day, was much softened and tears sprang into Will's eyes as he stood beside his father's grave and thought: "Would peace have come to this family when peace came to the nation?" God knew best and had brought peace in his own way.

A vase of fresh flowers upon the mound told him Floy had been there the evening before; and with a fervent, "God bless faithful little Floy," he angled across the commons to Elm Cottage.

Quick steps and busy hands were preparing a dinner such as never even Aunt Polly and Grace had fixed before; the pantry was fast being transformed into Wonderland under the big eyes of Gwen and Grant, as frosted cakes, pies, turkey, etc., were stored away ready for packing.

Floy was to be the Goddess of Liberty, and in her room were spread out her new white Swiss dress and

long white veil, both covered with silver stars; and the golden crown and graduating slippers lay beside them.

At ten o'clock the streets were full of vehicles and the procession was forming; when all was ready Will drove up to the cottage and brought Floy down.

The wagon for the states had been beautifully decorated and when the thirty-five bright-faced girls in white, took their places, and Floy stood on the pedestal, arranged in the center of the wagon, holding to the staff of the huge flag which floated over them, a spontaneous cheer went up from the enthusiastic crowd.

Mame, who represented South Carolina—no one was willing to represent one of the seceding states at first, but Mame and Lois had broken down that barrier by offering to take South Carolina and Georgia, claiming that they had been conquered by Union soldiers, anyway, and rather liked it—Mame had put her arm lovingly around Floy, when she first appeared, with:

"You are just beautiful! You surpass even your graduating make-up. This outfit will do for the other occasion; you'll only have to remove the stars; the veil is quite the thing!"

"Why, don't the stars look pretty? I guess I'll just keep it as it is!" Floy had laughingly replied.

Harry was "Uncle Sam." His red and white striped pants and star-spangled blue coat, Grace had made large enough for the doctor himself; but by the use of plenty of cotton, Harry had fitted them on, and looked the veritable old "Uncle Sam," his thin cheeks suggesting the recent sorrow some of his children had caused him.

After the huge procession had reached the grove, the

Goddess sang the "Red, White and Blue," all the states joining in the chorus; an eloquent address was followed by toasts and apt responses. The last of them and the most memorable was that of Rev. Miller in response to the toast, "The Union." He paid a beautiful tribute to its protection of individual and national rights; dwelt eloquently on "what it cost" the brave defenders, then asked permission to wander a little from the usual programme, and illustrate his subject.

He turned; at his signal "Uncle Sam" and the "Goddess of Liberty" stepped to the center of the rostrum, and—before the astounded crowd could recover from its surprise as the truth dawned upon them, the "Union" was perfected with, "I pronounce you man and wife. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder!"

Then an ear-splitting cheer told how all understood the apologue, and they adjourned for dinner and a good laugh.

Guy's prophecy was fulfilled; and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Osborne ate dinner with a host of laughing friends, before Harry had been at home two weeks.

CHAPTER XXIX

OFF DUTY

'Twas a bright June morning in '84. The perfume of roses filled the air about the Elms, where an elegant two-story residence had taken the place of the Gothic cottage which had looked an Eden to Will when, nineteen years ago, he had returned from the weary march and terrible bloodshed in the South to the rest, home-love and comfort this humble cot held for him.

Nineteen years of peace! "Uncle Sam's" boys had exchanged their uniforms and muskets for business suits and hoes; changed the tents and camp-fires for cozy homes and kitchen stoves, presided over by wives with happy faces; changed the hard-tack and bacon for biscuit, jelly, and pie.

Prosperity and thrift spoke on all sides about the elms. In the well-arranged, clean barn-lot, two large black horses arched their necks and neighed, contentedly, at the gate leading to the pasture, where grazed two good milch-cows on the green sward. A fine family of fowls sang and crowed about the hennery; while flowers, adorning the gravel-walk across the lawn, lifted their smiling faces, still bedewed with nature's tears, as the golden rays of the morning sun kissed them. The boys and girls of the war-years are the men and women of to-day. Will Morris, with his armless sleeve, and gentle Grace have lived their school-days over again in

those of Gwen and Grant; they have passed that trying-time for heart chords, when they had to give Gwen —the bright, laughing, singing Gwen, to live in a home of her own. 'Twas two years before this June morning; a dark-eyed handsome lawyer, whom Gwen had met while at the Musical Conservatory in Evanston, had sought her here, and the solo of her life became richer and fuller as it blended with that new deep voice into a duet.

'Twas Linn Lockridge, the son of Colonel Lockridge, to whom Will owed his life at Chattanooga. And, when the two colonels met, to give and receive children, they had laughingly queried, "Who's the debtor now?" as they clasped hands in warm brotherhood.

Gwen went to live in Illinois, where Linn was winning fame and laurels, if they did begin humbly, and she was happy as a bird. "Singing like a nightingale," Aunt Polly declared who had just returned from a visit to her pet—Aunt Polly, grown quite old now, but enjoying her chair at Will's, while she tells Floy's children of the stony paths they all tread "when Will was in the war, and your pa and ma was just a brave soldier boy and a mischievous gal."

All nature rang, as the glories of the day were revealed, but the inmates of the house were deaf to the sounds of mirth, and blind to the beauties of the diamond sprays and crystal-decked blossoms.

Will, a middle-aged man now—long, black whiskers and sweeping mustache quite hiding the finely cut mouth—the forehead higher still, since time had uprooted much of the dark hair—the steel-gray eyes keener

yet and more thoughtful; still the same erect form came out upon the porch at the side of the house and sighed, as he leaned heavily against the railing:

"Pshaw! it is not such a dreadful affair, and yet I never hated to do a thing so badly in my life!" he said soliloquizing, but Grace who had followed him out—the same patient gentle Grace, the violet eyes a trifle dimmer and cheeks of faded roses—heard it.

"Never mind, Will, don't worry so; we'll pull through some way; we always have." And Grace slipped her hand in his so confidently that a smile came again.

"Oh, it is not such a dreadful thing! We'll have to mortgage the place, though. Yes, you hate that word don't you, little woman?" as the face, turned up so cheerily to his own, looked appalled at the word she always thought meant "death grip."

"But, we can pay it back of course, out of the office, in three years, by living with little expense and by saving. We know how to 'rough it' don't we, my helper?"

"O, I just hate the mortgage! the very word frightens me," and Grace shuddered as she spoke it. "Thank God, the children are through school, and Grant has his long-dreamed-of farm! But, oh! if we should lose this dear old home! It does seem hard, Will, for us to have to pay this debt which someone else owes. I can't blame Clarke for the fire, of course; and last night he was nearly frantic—actually wept when the walls of the old mill fell in—wept like a child, and grasped my hand saying: 'In heaven's name forgive me, for asking Col. Morris to go my security!' Poor fellow, he was trying hard." Grace ended with a sob and Will's eyes were not dry as he said:

"I should not have done it, perhaps, but Clarke is one of the 'old boys' and they all have a warm place in my heart. He'd have paid it off in time, too, if the accident had not occurred; though it was careless of him to allow the insurance to run out."

Aunt Polly came now to the door with: "Come in, I won't listen to your secrets, and breakfast is getting cold."

The injured tone touched Grace's heart in a moment, for t'was one cherished object with her to make mother feel at home with them in the home she preferred, to the one Floy offered her, and Harry urged her to accept.

"We have no secrets from you, mother. We're just trying to see the way out of the dark," said Grace smiling.

A sunny-faced young man came whistling from the barn at this juncture; 'twas Grant, now grown into a sturdy-bodied, intelligent-faced youth, of twenty. Sturdy in mind—sturdy in principles! A smile and proud look greeted him, but his clear, blue eyes grew serious, as he suspected the subject from the faces.

"Now, look here, folks, we're going to sink with colors flying, if sink we must; but there's no use in getting down over it. I guess it is true the insurance had run out a week before, and Clarke Wells has nothing now. But we can borrow the money, father, on my place, and pay it O. K."

"Never! Your farm is yours! it was your choice rather than the college course; and a start in business, we meant to give you. No, 'Uncle Sam' will pay it off in three years and I can get the money;" so Grant said no more.

Will Morris had been postmaster at Mapleton for thirteen years, to the delight of all who got their mail there. His appointment was a surprise to him as well as to the whole village; it happened in this wise: A vacancy occurred by the death of Wilkinson who held it during the war; then petitions without number were sent in. Among them, several from old soldiers, who had rallied around that immortal leader, Grant, when he had headed the party-ticket, and who now thought that a soldier would be his choice for the place.

One of these aspirants had been Lieut. Wiley, and when he came to Col. Morris for his signature, without a pang of jealousy 'twas given; for though, personally, Will had never liked the over-bearing lieutenant, he knew him to have been a brave soldier and believed him to be an honest man.

Will was farming the best he could at the time, having a hand to help when 'twas positively necessary, but the family at Elm Cottage were knowing what hard times meant, even in time of peace. John Edwards, who was now editor of the "Mapleton Courier," had urged him to apply for the place; but Will would not, since he had signed a petition for another and "stuck to the farm." One day a large official envelope came from Washington to "Col. Wm. Morris." Imagine Will's surprise to find a commission for the postmaster's place, with a letter from Grant himself:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON D. C.
July 7th, 1871.

"TO WM. MORRIS, EX-COL. 7TH IOWA.—*Sir*:—Among the many signers of petitions for the place of post-

master of Mapleton, Iowa, I find your name to one, and send you the commission for the place, since I learn from your Congressman that you will probably accept it. I remember you, and am glad to do this; 'tis Uncle Sam's partial payment on his debt.

"U. S. GRANT, PRES. U. S."

Since the soldiers came home there had not been greater excitement in the village. Everybody was pleased, many jubilant. Will took the place of course, and loved Grant more than ever.

The duties of the office were not irksome to him at all, for he was careful and orderly by nature, and was so genial a companion and honest friend, that the people loved to have him there. Indeed, he grew to be the confidant of many whose mail he handled, and soon proved himself true to them and their interests. The office had a salary of one thousand dollars per annum; a snug sum it proved to the needy Morrises then, and a blessing it was to be to them now.

Two days after the fire, a notary came up to the Elms, and Grace put her name under Will's on that dreaded mortgage. Her face paled in spite of her efforts to keep calm. Aunt Polly couldn't bear to see it done, so she started for the garden to keep from crying but cried before she got there. Will commanded himself only with much effort; while Grant hastily left the room, feeling choky over his mother's sad face.

"The money can be raised all right in three years, I guess, but 'twill make my mother's hair whiten quicker!" he said. In the exciting campaign in the fall, the mortgage was quite forgotten. Grant was just old enough to cast his first presidential ballot, which

he did for Blaine and "Black Jack" Logan, whom his father loved.

A peep at the torch-light processions shows the change in the Mapleton young folks which twenty years have wrought. Prominent among those who couldn't vote but could hurrah with vigor, was Del Lawrence Osborne, son of the popular Dr. Harry, who commanded the company and took charge of the drilling; Jack Riley's twin sons, Link and Sherm, marched together and hallooed among the loudest.

A company of girls in white, with red, white and blue sashes was led by Jennie Edwards, a second Lois, with sparkling brown eyes and smooth, glossy, chestnut braids; she is the editor's special pride and always spends Saturday afternoons in the office, though she is taking the scientific course at the normal school conducted by Prof. Baker, Judge Burton's son-in-law. Lawrie Osborne often brings his sisters, Mame and Lois down to the hall to hear the campaign speeches. Dr. Harry invariably comes with a bright sunny-faced woman, who chats so pleasantly with everyone and grasps Mrs. Mame Riley's hand so eagerly, that all the school-girls know they were the old chums, "Floy and Mame," whose names are coupled in so many library books.

"Will, are you not afraid you'll be relieved from duty next March when the victors divide the spoils?" asked Editor Edwards, one morning, as he stood talking in the postoffice, shortly after the returns had unquestionably shown the party to which they belonged to have been defeated.

"Wouldn't be surprised if they'd give the place to

Nasby. Oh, really 'tis only fair for the victorious party to hold the offices; we've had our day, I suppose," and Will began stamping the mail quite composedly.

"They'll do it too, I'll wager," said Jack Riley who had just come in, but heard both question and answer. "There's no mention of such a thing now, though; but 'tis only a question of time 'till off comes your head."

Will looked concerned in spite of his effort to keep apparently indifferent. The thought of that mortgage, which it would be hard to lift with one arm, would bring the color to his face.

"I don't believe there will be a single petition sent in; certainly not," said the editor. "There's no reason for a change and no one would think of asking for one; it would be preposterous."

A number of men came in at this point, and the conversation became so interesting, as they compared notes on the experiences of the war that the "small boys" who should have been in school, slipped in, in twos and threes to attend to the old soldiers' meeting. The "boys" had not talked much about the war, until the sad scenes were softened by time, but now they enjoyed talking it over. But when, after the inauguration, no petitions were made for a postmaster in sympathy with the administration, Will began to hope he was to be retained. He was particularly careful in the discharge of every duty connected with the office; for the mortgage on the old home, and Grace's frightened look, as she signed it, haunted him, and he hoped to pay off that debt, at least.

One November evening, as the household sat together, Grace and Aunt Polly knitting, Will resting, and Grant

reading aloud to them Grace asked suddenly "Shall we celebrate our silver wedding? It com on Thanksgiving, you know."

Will looked up quite surprised. "Why! what's that! Silver is twenty-five years, aint it?"

"Hurrah! that's the thing, exactly," cried Grant enthusiastically, "of course we shall! 'Twill never come again and mother wants to, I know."

"Why, Grace, I'm sure I wish we could; what will it cost?" asked Will, who was thinking of the mortgage as Grace spoke."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of having one of those stiff, fashionable receptions where a great crowd of mon-eyed people are invited, even if one does not care a fig for them, so as to get fine presents. I should want just our family and a few friends who love us and are loved by us. The presents might be omitted."

"Did you notice the stress laid on the word "might?" asked Grant mischievously. "Now, mother mine, you want a whole silver service; you are picturing a handsome outfit back of that serene indifference."

"It wouldn't cost no great sight, nohow," said Aunt Polly, "we've got chickens and turkeys, pickles a plenty and fruit a plenty, to get up a real nice dinner. We havn't had such a good fruit year since you was a boy, Will."

"Well, so be it; 'twill bring Gwen home sure; that's the finest thing about it," and Will smiled, as did they all. Grant wrote to Gwen next morning, and within ten days she was with them. She didn't write she was coming, but just came into the office with some old school-friends she met on her way from the depot, and

Will didn't notice her until on opening the delivery windows she stepped up with "Any mail for me?" He was justly proud of her; she had quite filled the promise of her childhood—a fair face, wondrous eyes, like Grace's own, while a keen intellect and good heart had stamped the face with something which quite outshone the fair complexion and rose-tinted lips.

How they laughed to get her back, and laughed again as, with almost childish glee, she rummaged through the forgotten letters and playthings, sang the old songs with Grant, or had again the quartette of home voices that blended so melodiously. Thanksgiving morn came clear and pleasant. Truly thankful, Will looked out upon the Frost King's wonders, then upon the interior of his home, where busy, loving hands were working a rival picture to celebrate the day when Grace became his own.

Dear Grace! Through trials dark as night and scenes of brightest sunshine, she had been his second self, cheering, lighting the gloom, or softening the glare of the light. Ah! God had dealt kindly with him.

Aunt Polly, Grace and Will, who was an earnest Christian now, went to church, but good old Rev. Miller didn't address them; he had gone to live in that home he used to picture so beautifully and point to so earnestly.

Gwen stayed to bake the turkey and Grant "to amuse her," he said, "and receive, if any of the company came before she got her bangs curled." Linn was coming on the train. Many of the guests had gone to church, first, and came up with the folks as they came from church. Three generations they were, and yet no set

of them felt "out." The old Dr. Osborne joked more to-day than on the same day, twenty-five years ago.

Dr. Harry married the blushing pair; and Capt. Edwards presented the silver tea service from the company, and a handsome silver-headed cane to Will, which Col. Lockridge had sent by Gwen. At train time, Grant went to meet Linn. During the general hand-shaking upon his arrival at the Elms, Grant motioned his father from the room, and, in the library, gave him a letter from the postoffice department at Washington. They read it together—the message bearing the President's seal—it ran thus:

"You are hereby relieved from duty, and will turn over the postoffice previously held by you to George Powell, Esq. whose commission has been forwarded.

"Signed, ———, PRES. U. S.

"That's all right, of course! I've feared this all along." Will tried to speak composedly but the agitation in his manner didn't escape Grant.

"Confound it! it isn't all right, it's all wrong! What was the use in the sham of retaining all the public officers, except for just reasons for dismissal! It's all bosh! They're turning out all the office-holders of opposite political opinion just as fast as they can, and what makes me mad, is the pretension of retaining them."

"My bonds hold good till next July," and his face blanched a little as he thought, "and the mortgage falls due in June. There's no use kicking against facts; I'm discharged, is the best phrase to be used; it's nothing of itself but—pshaw! It is tough to be dubbed an 'offensive partisan,' or some such bosh,

when really it is but carrying out the cry, 'Turn the rascals out!' Not a word of this until after dinner," Will added, as Gwen came to announce it.

In good old-fashioned equality, Floy and Gwen waited upon the table, where the merry party laughed over the pleasing events of the last twenty-five years; mingling the laughter of youth with the pleasantries of maturity and the reminiscences of the aged.

"Had you been informed, ladies and gentlemen, that I had been put upon the retired list?" asked Will, when after dinner all had returned to the parlor; and he actually smiled, not exactly merrily, at the puzzled looks about him.

"What's that?" "How?" "What are you driving at now?" came simultaneously from the company.

"O, I've got the papers for it!" and Will produced the long envelope from Washington.

"Your removal!" exclaimed Harry.

"The deuce it is!" put in Jack Riley.

"Yes, my removal," rejoined Will without looking at Grace. "They've turned the 'rascal out,'" said he carelessly, but most of the company knew the pang it must have cost to say it, as if it was a trivial affair, for all knew what the burning of the mill was to Will, and how bravely he had given his own notes to Clarke's creditors, mortgaging his farm for the security.

Aunt Polly's regrets vented themselves in a stream of indignation against some undermining person, who had applied secretly for the postoffice, and the Executive, who would push a soldier out of a place to earn a living when, by his love of country and self-sacrifice to save her from disunion, he had made himself incapable of filling all places of a busy life.

Everybody felt the justice of the denunciation. Jack and the Captain didn't hesitate to say so—while Grant's eyes glistened with resentment, as he saw the tears sparkle in his mother's eyes, when she tried to smile at Aunt Polly's vehemence and smooth over the hard speeches.

Harry, who had been talking with Grant long and earnestly, lingered as the company dispersed—his little daughters, Mame and Lois, were helping Gwen clear the dishes, and that gave him a good pretext.

"Why don't you apply for a pension, Will?" asked Harry as they lit their cigars in the library alone, "'tis just collecting a just debt, which the nation owes every disabled soldier. I've respected the innate pride which has kept you from applying, hitherto; but you need it now; 'tis no charity, only a debt—and it should be paid."

"O, I'd hate to dun such an old friend as Uncle Sam, and if we all keep our health we'll pull through some way; I don't believe it would pauperize the Government to pension all the soldiers, and believe it will come some day, but I'll never ask for a cent; particularly now when I need it, it seems too humiliating," and Will puffed a cloud of smoke that nearly enveloped him.

Harry thought of answering: "You owe it to your family, Will," but a feeling of delicacy prevented the words, which would have wounded the proud, sensitive man. Will's next words showed that he had the same thoughts in his mind.

"Thank God! the children are provided for partially. Gwen has taken her college course she used to rave

over—and bless her, she did it with honors too, and now can be a companion indeed to Linn in his studies as well as a helpmate in home duties; Grant has his farm—my father's farm and my boyhood home. Now, if I just could save Grace's home! I'll do it some way!"

Grace and Floy came to search for them now, and soon Harry and Floy, with the two merry girls, the black-eyed Mame and pretty blue-eyed Lois, took leave of the home-party standing upon the porch, Will and Grace, Linn and Gwen, and Aunt Polly who waved their adieux smilingly, though a dread of coming evil rang a minor strain of sadness through the parting notes. Only those who have possessed and loved an old home, made sacred by the memories of happy surprises, sounds of children's prattle, manhood's hopes and ambitions, woman's tenderest feelings of motherhood—and only they who loved the place where their babies first smiled at them, the paths where the ceaseless patter of restless feet kept down the grass; only they can know the feelings that wrung a sigh from Will's compressed lips as he looked around on this cherished retreat with the haunting fear of losing it.

"Don't, Will, don't look like that! 'It may not be my way, it may not be thy way, and yet it is His own way; the Lord will provide,'" quoted Grace softly, slipping her hand confidently into his. "'Into each life some rain must fall; some days must be dark and dreary.' "

"Yes," said Gwen, "but the clouds ought not to have come up to-day; though on every Fourth of July I can remember, and every picnic day, no matter how brightly

the sun shone in the morning, it always rained before the sun set."

"The Fourth your Aunt Floy was married to Harry, not a sign of a rain-drop fell all day," Aunt Polly said, "and the sun seems to shine for 'em right along. My! but the folks looked foolish, when Rev. Miller stepped upon the platform and married 'Liberty and Uncle Sam!'"

"That was a joke!" cried Gwen laughing again, though she'd heard it many times before; it pleased grandma and didn't hurt her.

"Now, folks, let's go in and sing something jolly to drive dull care away."

"I must go down to the office a little while," said Will, "but will listen to you sing 'the day is done.' I'd stay any time for that; Linn, you'll go down then, won't you?"

"Certainly," and they went in to find rest in Grace's song.

In the meantime, Grant Morris and Jennie Edwards were driving down the road past the old Morris place; Grant's farm now. The blacks arched their glossy necks and took a brisk trot; the old place looked quite home-like for the last owner had built a new house, more humble than the one that reared its head heavenward from among the elms, but a pretty white cottage near the old site where Floy had played by the rose-bush in the long ago.

Jennie blushed crimson as Grant drew up in front of the vacant house; for a year ago this winter, Grant had told her she should be its mistress, or it would never be occupied; and she had consented—how could she

do otherwise? It would be such a shame to have all the sweetness of that old place lost for want of someone to enjoy it—and they had fixed New Year's morning to begin the new partnership, whose place of business this was to be.

Grant looked at Jennie with a longing, hungry look, that puzzled her completely, when she glanced around wondering at the silence.

"I have brought you here to tell you something," he said; "'tis hard for me to say and yet I feel sure your true woman's heart would bid me do it; to this place I brought you, for it holds the sweetest, dearest hopes of my life. Oh, it costs me almost more than I've manhood to bear to jeopardize that hope."

Jennie's face grew white and scarlet by turns. What was this Grant was saying, why did he look like that? but Grant was looking at the place now and didn't notice the questioning eyes.

"This old place has a history; here my father fought the conflict between duty to country and inclination to stay with home, wife and mother. He had the courage to do right at all hazards, at even the sacrifice of a father's love, and afterward a right arm. Yes, 'tis a fitting place to ask you, Jennie, to help me make a sacrifice for the father."

"What? Tell me at once what you ought to do, and be sure I'll second the motion; for if anybody in this world deserves a sacrifice from their children your parents certainly do."

"Now, when you look so bravely beautiful, and talk like that, you make it harder for me—don't you see?" and Grant kissed the brave face turned to his own,

then gazed into the melting brown eyes, as he said: "Now, that father is removed from office, there is no possible show for him to lift that mortgage and the money must be paid by June. I must sell this place—father gave it to me, you know—and save my mother's home."

"You're a splendid boy, Grant! Do it!" Jennie said earnestly.

"But I can't have you so soon, darling, and, more than that, it's plain as day to me that I ought to do this, cost what it may to me to give up the hope of home here with you—but I've no right to ask you to wait until I can make another home for you."

"You have the right if you want me to, Grant."

"Want you to? I want you to, darling, I want you now! I'll have no other to be my wife, if you don't wait; but darling, I don't know how long the waiting might be! you love me now, yes, Jennie, I know it, but who can tell what the weary waiting might bring? No, I must leave you free—free as air, though it breaks my heart. But when I have a home again, may I ask you to make it the dearest place in the world to me by being the sweet wife who rules and blesses it?"

"I will always be true to you, Grant; be the time, months or years, you will find me just the same," was the sweet, brave answer.

CHAPTER XXX

ON DUTY

"Well, I can't make it out!" and Grace Morris sat down by Will to think over it, with her head resting on her hand, her elbows on the table, where lay her work-basket untouched. Aunt Polly put down her knitting instinctively, to help ferret out the secret whatever it might be, while Will looked up, interested, from the evening paper. "I can't understand about Grant and Jennie. If he's going to marry her why don't he do it? You were in such a hurry about getting me, I supposed everybody was anxious to have it over," and the mischievous look toward Will made him remember Grace Osborne's winning ways.

"Anxious mamma, do you want to get your last child married off?" asked Will with feigned astonishment.

"Not exactly, but I'd like to know he was treated fair and square. Now we all thought, last fall, Grant was arranging to bring his wife to the cottage; for everything pointed that way. But now there's not a shadow of a hint that Mrs. Grant Morris will ever be, and I'd just like to know what it all means, that's all!" and Grace examined the holes in Will's stockings she took from the work-basket, as if she'd unravel the secret, as easily as the stocking.

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if she'd jilted him; though he don't let on and laughs as jolly as if nothin'

was the matter," said Aunt Polly, "But you can't tell nothin' about gals now-a-days; and I can tell you Jennie Edwards aint nigh the gal her mother was."

"Come, come, don't slander your neighbors, ladies," said Will, "I don't understand Grant's arrangements, exactly, myself, and if he'd consult his old father in his courting, I'd tell him how 'twas done. But I see no need to worry as long as he keeps his appetite like he does, and laughs like he'd raise the roof." Then Will resumed his paper contentedly, but Grace was not content.

"There stands his house vacant, and another thing, most of the crop this year he had put out on this place."

"Grant is working like a trooper! I wish I could pitch in like he can; we'd clean that mortgage off in a hurry," and Will's sigh told the worry that was mixing his hair with gray. "I think we can get the notes renewed though, and we'll pay eight hundred dollars in June." Will was keeping books in a store down town at a salary of forty dollars a month, a meager sum it seemed, to pay off those notes, but he hoped to get into something else.

"Well, I calkerlate to ask Grant right out, why he don't marry that gal," said Aunt Polly knitting briskly. "It may be she's flirting with him, just holdin' off to see how anxious he'll get. Law-sakes! She aint the only gal in town! I wager he's down to her house to-night, though; for he looked knowin' like when you asked him to take Floy's butter, if he was goin' to the post-office. If he'd just pretend he was gettin' sweet on Myrtle Linden, Fred's oldest gal, she'd come to her senses sudden."

"You must do nothing of the kind, mother," said Will, "don't you know such things had better be left to the young folks themselves? Grant will manage that all right. I'm not at all uneasy on that score. Don't you want the last from Washington?" and he read aloud.

But the subject was not entirely dismissed from Grace's fertile brain; and the next Sabbath she found herself watching Jennie Edwards closely. She saw Grant look long after the trim figure in blue flannel that passed him with a bow, but after Sunday school she talked full ten minutes with the young minister, whose face showed more interest than Grace thought called for upon strictly S. S. matters.

That afternoon when Grant was lounging in the library alone, reading "Miles Standish's Courtship," she came in and sat beside him. He greeted her with a smile, but showed a little surprise, which increased as she asked suddenly:

"Do you suppose Rev. King contemplates making one of our Mapleton girls a King to rule the parsonage?"

"O ho! that would be a fine idea—I believe I'll suggest it to him any way"—Grant's merry laugh didn't sound as if she had touched the tender chord. "No, I'm afraid the idea never entered his theory-filled brain. Now, who would you suggest? Aunt Sue Clayton is fair, fat and forty; and would make a fine preacher's wife, but she's a trifle old. He never notices any of the young girls, though."

Grace grew impatient. Will would laugh at her if he should happen in and find her sounding Grant, so she "bravely waded in."

"When are you going to bring some one to your cottage, Grant?" the question sounded awfully blunt, and Grace had meant to be so discreet and sly.

"O that's the cream in that cocoanut, is it?" And Grant's laugh brought confusion's stamp on the face doing its best to appear calm. "I wondered what you were baiting for. Now, mother mine, I feel hurt"—and the injured look seemed nature's own. "You want to get rid of me, do you? I remember how you cried when Gwen hinted at such a thing as marrying, and—yes, I do feel wounded, I see it all clearly now—you're tired of sewing on buttons and mending for me. Alas! that it should ever have come to this!"

"Naughty boy! I've a mind to box your ears. Shame! To make fun of your poor old mother when she was going to tell you where you might find some one, or write out a proposal for you, if you didn't know what to say—ungrateful!" and Grace walked quickly from the room, pretending offended pride, but the mischievous look in her eye told Grant not to be alarmed, as he looked smilingly after her. Grace had heard Will coming and was partially satisfied; besides Grant was evidently not suffering from unreciprocated affection and she wanted—oh, so badly—to keep this last chick under her maternal wing as long as possible.

As the time for the maturity of the notes came, Will's steps grew heavier and slower; what could he do to raise the money if they must be paid? The creditors lived in Nebraska, now, a new state, and perhaps would want the money. He wrote them and offered to renew with higher interest and impatiently awaited the answer.

It came at last, only a few days before the June day when it was due. Will's face blanched and his firm mouth quivered painfully as he read:

"I must have the money when it is due. I send the notes by this mail to my attorney. Please attend to it promptly or the mortgage must be closed."

That sounded like a heartless threat to Will as he read it and, for a moment, he felt very indignant; yet 'twas but business, perhaps, and the inevitable result of the risk if prosperity failed.

What could be done? Nothing! positively nothing! but see the home, Grace's home and mother's sold! The thought maddened him! Mother would grieve o'er it, and vent her grief in sad words and sobs. But Grace—Grace's sad, mournful eyes while she tried to smile would be harder for him to meet. "How will I ever tell them?" he thought, as he reached the gate of the beautiful home, which looked now more dear than ever.

"A pension would have saved it—but 'tis too late for that or anything."

And in the boldness of despair he marched straight into the sitting-room—bright with blooming geraniums, and fragrant with perfume from the roses outside the open window—and laid the letter in Grace's hand, as she was working on a pretty table-scarf for Gwen.

"Oh!" came the exclamation of mingled surprise and pain, as Grace clutched convulsively at the table; then looked with terror-filled eyes into Will's face, as he stood, despairingly, watching her.

He wished he had softened the blow by preparing her for it; but he had felt desperate at first! A great

pity for her though, rallied his stronger self, and he stroked her brown hair tenderly now.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Aunt Polly, coming from her room at the sound of Grace's moan.

"The very worst, mother; the farm must be sold, for there's no other way to raise the money."

"Does your letter say that he won't wait?" Aunt Polly was coolest of the three; "have you tried to borrow the money any place else?"

"Yes; to both questions! I've tried *every* place else I know of; but money is scarce as hens' teeth; Harry has tried too, but he can't help, for two thousand dollars is too big a sum to raise. No; I've lost your old home,—forgive me, Grace, for taking such a risk, but I never dreamed of this! Nobody is to blame seriously, but, oh, it's hard, *hard!*" and Will's abject look as he sank on a chair and gazed, with a deep frown, into space, brought Grace to his side in a moment.

"Don't Will! I can't bear to see you look like that,—you've tried too hard to break down now! There's a way out of the darkness—some way." But even cheery Grace couldn't find the way; though in the dark days that followed she sought the help of that Friend—who never fails—for strength to do what she could, and bear what she must in this trying time.

Grant learned the crushing tidings at once, but they tried to conceal the suffering it cost them. He talked bravely, worked harder, and was kinder to each of them, and talked often with Harry.

One June day, Will came up earlier than usual and with hard-set muscles, told Grace and Aunt Polly, he had told the attorney to close the mortgage. "There

is no other way—there is no private sale, no money," he said despondently.

Grace had quite made up her mind to give up the old home bravely no matter what it cost her in secret; but the tears would fall in spite of herself when the ordeal came.

"Well, we can go and live with Grant until he wants the house himself," said Aunt Polly. "There's no use a-bein' timid about mentionin' it, when you gave him the place, though I wonder he has not thot of it afore this. Floy and Harry ses for me to come and live there, and perhaps I oughter, only I—"

"No, mother, as long as we've a home of any kind it's yours, too, if you care to stay—and 'twouldn't seem home-like to any of us to have you away," and Grace kissed the wrinkled face whose lips quivered noticeably at the thought of finding another nook, even in Floy's family.

"What we'll do next I don't know; rent some place down town I suppose, and live from hand to mouth! Oh, it's too hard for you to be treated this way, Grace," and Will's head sank with a thump on the table while he sobbed as he hadn't done since he gave Harry up as dead in the long ago. He had wept then because he must break the news that would wound her dear heart. And now through causes he could not prevent, she must be homeless; she who had loved this place so; the place where their children were born, raised to womanhood and manhood!

Grace came to him, but her tears fell with his awhile, before she could say: "Never despair! 'God is where he was!' We can begin again with his help.

Home's where the heart is, you know, so we carry ours with us, if we're all together. We have one another, Will; 'tis not near so hard to bear this as to bear the loss of a dear one. God brought you to us again from the war." Will drew her down upon his lap and kissed the dear lips which so often spoke words of comfort. A quick, firm step rang on the walk outside, and Grant bounded up the front steps with school-boy elasticity, and right into the front room, actually smiling; though Aunt Polly met him with, "Hush! the place is to go for the mortgage!" and gave a deprecating look toward Will and Grace weeping.

"Not a bit of it, Grandma"—and advancing to Will thrust a paper into his hand.

"Why, what is it, Grant?"

"Read it, sir!" Will opened the large paper, with its notary seal.

"The mortgage! What does it mean? How did you get it?" he gasped, too bewildered to notice the word "Paid" written so prominently across the sheet.

"Got it of Herrick and Burnett—and here are the notes ready to make a fire for dinner, mother, and I'm awfully hungry too."

"Grant," Will trembled like a leaf, as he rose, "where did you get the money—for you must have paid it—did you mortgage your farm?

"No, sir—sold it," and went on laughing at the exclamations of the three.

"Sold it yesterday for two thousand dollars; and the notes were only eighteen hundred, so I'm two hundred ahead!" Grace threw her arms about his neck and

sobbed aloud; Aunt Polly laughed until she cried, saying: "Grant allers was a boss boy!" Will was quite overcome.

"Grant, my noble boy—I'm proud of you, but I can't accept this sacrifice! No, this is too much!"

"Why, it is no sacrifice! It is a pleasure to do this. I'd feel mean as dirt if I didn't do it; this is the proudest moment of my life, father!" as he wrung the hand that clasped his so firmly.

That evening, Grandma and Grandpa Osborne drove out with Dr. Harry and Floy, to congratulate Will and Grace that the old home was saved, and Floy whispered something to Grant—something Lawrie had heard the editor's daughter say at the printing office—that brought the color more than all the words of praise heaped upon him.

They had known for some time that Grant had sold his farm to give possession on the day before the mortgage fell due, and the old doctor—in whose heart there still burned a fervent love for soldiers—said:

"'Twas a worthy act, my boy, quite fitting for a soldier's son."

That night the Chatauqua club met. Grant walked home with a lady, who smiled approvingly as he recounted the whole scene to her, and ended with: "The waiting and working is hard, but it pays as it goes."

One morning, soon after, his father joined him, as he hitched the blacks to go to cut hay; and after discussing the farm prospects awhile, reverted to the payment of the debt. His face had lost its careworn expression, and its old hopefulness beamed brightly forth, and Grant quickened his gait in sheer gladness.

"My boy, now that the old home is saved for your mother, so she can sing blithely again as she goes about her work—just hear her now, singing an old love tune, as I live"—and both stopped to listen to Grace's voice, as it came floating in the old song, "When the roses come again," through the kitchen window.

"Now that is as it should be," resumed Will, "but what I was going to say, all that the place can yield this year together with the increase in stock is yours, and we must make a desperate effort to regain the farm in two years; in the meantime, if you want to bring a wife here—there's plenty of room and welcome, or we can put up another house on the place."

"There! you want to marry me off too, do you? or rather marry me on; there's plenty of time to get a place for Mrs. Grant Morris, though, if I ever find her —what is it Carleton says about two families? 'A very small house for one family will do, but I never seen the house, that was big enough for two.' What would he think about trying three?"

"Ho, ho! you take quite a philosophical view of the matter for a young man of twenty-two. If you survive Cupid's darts another year, I predict you will be a confirmed old bachelor."

"Is that remark congratulatory or sympathetic?" asked Grant, as he mounted the mower.

"For answer, see that kitchen, and compare it with Jones' bachelor quarters; with boot jacks, tin plates, and old pants promiscuously scattered;" and Will stepped into the neat, orderly apartment again before going down to his books. Grant started off in the

summer's harvest, with a merry whistle and a heart full of the hope of youth, now that the burden of debt was removed and his father and mother were contented and happy. The road to his goal seemed long indeed, but its end he could see far off in the distance; and in the home he pictured to himself, a pair of melting brown eyes were always prominent.

Hay was the only thing that was abundant that year, for the scorching sun of a dry July and August burned up the corn, and Jack Frost stole much of the fall harvest. Next year and the next the fields received, but wouldn't give back the usual abundance, and the outlook was discouraging—more than once Grant leaned on the pasture-gate, and weighed the questions all over again:

"Would it pay to try again? Or seek another way to the goal? When, if ever, would the end come?"

Grace and Will had hoped each year to lay up something toward Grant's start anew; but when old "Dame Nature" seemed to be pulling the other way, 'twas 'hard work with little pay.' In the heated campaign of '88, both Will and Grant worked enthusiastically and to advantage. Grace laughed at Will's excitement now, and, especially, when called upon one evening at a rally, he responded in a rousing speech. He enjoyed it—was well read—and of late years had been quite a student—so gave his townsmen the benefit of it.

The soldiers were especially loud in their praise of him as a political leader.

Harry and Grant had many long talks during these days which always closed abruptly when Will approached.

The postmaster, Geo. Howell, was quite unpopular, for Will Morris was a hard man to follow; so when Morris's party was restored to power again, he was suggested at once to take his old place.

Will knew there would be a change, and was anxious to take the place again, for Grant's farm would then be forthcoming. A month before the new administration would enter office, a petition was sent to Washington, to the Congressman to present at an early date. Will felt that act premature but knew how numerous such petitions usually were, and probably would be now. The petition had been gone but a week when Grant came up one evening to supper, in such jubilant spirits that all knew something had happened.

"Why, Grant, have you been paying off another mortgage?" asked Grace, as Grant with head thrown back, talking of school-boys' pranks, and telling humorous stories to the family sitting at supper, reminded her of that day when the joyous face brightened the gloom, even before the glad truth was known. "Something has happened, or is going to happen."

"Confess, sir," said Will, who had been watching him curiously for some time.

"Are we going to have some one to eat in Gwen's place, or is Gwen herself coming? I notice you have always got the mail lately."

"I wish I could say both, but my reputation for truthfulness must not be compromised—no: no mortgage in my pocket, mother mine, but you may hug me as you did then—only wait until I take my collar off, for I'm going out among them to-night."

Yet after supper he seemed in no hurry to go, but

wiped the dishes while Grace washed them, and Aunt Polly fixed the potatoes for breakfast; then coaxed Grace to sing "Home Sweet Home," and "Do They think of me at Home."

At seven o'clock, Grant still hadn't gone, when a knock came at the parlor door; Grace answered it to find Capt. Edwards and wife with Harry and Floy. A welcome company they were who often came, and Grace didn't see the looks Grant and they exchanged, so didn't suspect he knew they were coming. Will had gone to post some accounts; coming up as usual at eight o'clock, he heard the music and sound of voices, and quickened his pace.

"Hurrah! you couldn't have pleased me better, this cold night," he exclaimed; "I thought you were going into the country, Harry."

"So I was and here I am, rusticating in your easy chair. Now let's have some apples while we talk to you;" Harry was at home at the Elms and acted so.

Grant brought apples, and Grace, cake to eat with them, while the company talked gayly as time-tried, fire-tested friends can.

"Well, Will, your pension is heard from;" said Harry unconcernedly at last.

"My pension! What do you mean now? A joke of some sort, but I don't catch the point." Will looked from one to another but getting no light from their smiling faces.

"Yes, your pension has been allowed. Back pay came in to-day in drafts on First National Bank of Chicago. Do your duty, Grant."

How they all laughed at the three faces, as the

truth began to get through their befogged brains.

"How did you do it?" "Well, if that don't beat anything I ever heard of!" came with various ejaculations, through the chorus of laughter.

"Now, look here, is this a prank to try my earnestness about a pension? Don't trifle beyond reason!"

The quizzical, puzzled look made them laugh again, now that they were started; the inertia of laughter is so hard to overcome.

But Grant stepped to the table, near which Will stood gazing round at them, and took from his pocket a package.

"Here's proof of our sincerity. My father, accept this from "Uncle Sam" as partial payment on his debt of gratitude;" and counted the drafts out on the table.

There was no mistake about it—it was no trick, for there was the official seal, and here lay the *bona fide* drafts.

Aunt Polly exclaimed, "Bless the Lord; and may he bless Uncle Sam and you folks for bringing the good." Grace kissed Grant and then Will, slipping her hand in his, in her old way, to show sympathy of any kind. She laughed through her tears at the proud, sensitive man, quite overcome at the unexpected blessing.

Oh! he had seen times he needed it, but hated to seek it; and now Grant needed the lift; it brought a great burden free at the thought. It wouldn't bring back the right arm, nothing would pay for its loss, but it would make its loss easier to bear by smoothing the rough places. All this went through his mind as he stood speechless.

"Who did it—and how?" finally came in a voice husky with emotion.

"Uncle Sam did it, through your army friends."

"Grant worked it up, himself," put in Harry; "he don't need to lay this blame on our shoulders."

"Grant, I'm debtor to you again; did ever a father owe a son so much?" The tears ran down his cheeks as he grasped Grant's hand, and then he shook hands heartily with all the conspirators. Then the story came out: how Grant and Harry—at first in the talking Grace had wondered at on the memorable Thanksgiving day, and in many similar ones—had decided to take matters into their own hands, since Will hesitated to apply for a deserved pension; and had finally got it through, though many times they'd given it up.

They had felt much disappointed when it failed to come in time for Will to pay off the mortgage himself; but never too late for some good, and Will's eyes sparkled as he planned another farm for Grant and the surprise he meant it should be. Not a word of it should the boy know (for Grant was still "boy" to Will, no matter how tall and broad-shouldered he was) until he would put the deed in his hand. Ah, it should be a fine farm; then, if Capt. Edwards could spare his daughter, why what was to hinder making the boy happily homed? He would see about his part of it soon.

"Now, if that petition for the office could be recalled, I'd do it," said Will later on, as the company prepared to leave.

"Not much! No; we want our old postmaster!" exclaimed Capt. Edwards, "that's the clamor from this whole community. Not another word of that."

And in early spring the commission came, signed by the new President, and, with it, patriotic congratulations from Clarkson, upon the "return of the soldier to his post."

CHAPTER XXXI

BALANCING ACCOUNTS

"Well, Mr. Henderson, I want the place and if you can make up your mind to sell it, I'll make it to your interest to do so." Will Morris looked more anxious than a buyer usually allows himself to show, as he glanced into Mr. Henderson's pondering face.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure," deliberately began the old farmer, sitting down on the pile of hickory-wood stacked in the back yard for summer use. "I don't care to part with the place; it suits me, and it suits the old woman; I suppose, though, we could find another'n that would do. What's your offer on it?"

"What you paid for it and two hundred dollars more." The old farmer shook his head and Will proceeded: "Land is cheaper now than then; but it's my old boyhood home, right here by my own, and it's Grant's old farm; he'd rather have it, or I could get as good a place for sixteen hundred dollars; what do you say?"

"Make it a hundred dollars more and I'll make the deed to-morrow, or to-day if you say so."

"It's paying you a cool seven hundred for an inducement to sell—but I'll do it. When will you give possession?"

"O, right away, I reckon, if you want it. My wife is a hanker'n' for a visit to our son in Kansas, and maybe we'll move out there."

"Well, I wish you would say nothing about the sale, if it's no inconvenience to you; Grant sold the place to you, you remember without my knowledge, and I would like to buy it back without his knowledge. We'll draw up the deed to Grant." Will drove back in high spirits.

"The woman folks can manage to get the cottage all fixed ready for its new mistress and Mrs. Grant Morris can move to the farm they planned before the dreadful mortgage busted everything up. Of course, they'd planned it before, or, at least thought of it, I'll wager, though they kept it wondrous sly." And Will Morris drove down to the east corner of his place to the new house that was going up and Grant was superintending. 'Twas very like the cottage on Henderson's place; Grant had planned it, and that plan had told Will and Grace that Grant and Jennie had once thought to make the cottage on the Henderson place their home.

When the lift from "Uncle Sam" came so opportunely, Will and Grace told Grant that the Elms was his to use if he chose to farm; for, as Will was in the postoffice again, that salary made him independent in the support of Grace and Aunt Polly; and they would erect a house for him on the place if he chose. Grant had told them he'd accept the offer, and would bring Mrs. Morris No. 3 to the place as soon as the lodge for her could be built.

And this May morning, when Will drove up to it, with a knowing look at Grace, who had walked down with Grant to keep him from seeing Will drive to Hendersons, it was assuming a tangible form. Grace rode back with Will and was left at the residence with

a glad look in her motherly face. Then she hastened in to tell Aunt Polly, that the old home was soon to be Grant's again; while Will drove whistling down the road to the postoffice.

The village gossips had their hands and hearts full—yes; and mouths too, for that matter—in the next few weeks. For the new house being constructed at the Elms; Gwen's coming home and saying Linn would come in time to go back with her; the suspicious stir at Capt. Edwards; and the bundles that came through the express-office to Jennie, made food for many a fine chat across the back-yard fence and o'er the afternoon teas. But though most of the secrets were ferreted out by curious "private detectives," none could explain all the mysterious goings among the matrons--Grace, Lois and Floy, or the wise councils they seemed to hold when seen alone

No; something unexplained would come to light yet; the cards came out for the wedding at Capt. Edwards at twelve o'clock; and, also, other cards to the reception in the evening of the same day at the Elms.

That the affair would be the grandest of the season no one doubted. The young people in the circle in which Grant and Jennie were merry leaders, were in a whirl of excitement. Comparisons of dresses and presents; prophecies for wedded bliss, and regrets at losing the pair from the circle of single blessedness was the order of the day; yet aside from what all knew and talked about, the elder conspirators were preparing a snug little home for the "children," when they were ready for its occupancy.

The Hendersons had gone to Kansas on a visit,

everybody said, but everybody didn't know that before going they had stored their goods in the smoke-house by the cottage to be shipped when they wrote for them.

The week the cards came out, many trips were made across the meadow to the supposed Henderson farm. (Aunt Polly too, made several, always arranging things). Two nights before the wedding-day, Grant saw a wagon heavily loaded go down the road, and wondered a little about it; but soon dismissed the thought. Next morning early Lois and Floy drove down the canopied road and Will and Grace went across the meadow at the same time, and meeting at the cottage, unloaded the pretty new furniture that wagon had brought, and arranged it tastefully and neatly in the cottage.

Grandpa Osborne, too, that afternoon drove down the road with a spring wagon full of flowers from Grandma's choice collection, which Gwen and Floy arranged on the shelves Will had put up for them. How much it reminded Floy of the time they fixed up Will's cottage, and she spoke to the others of it—only then Floy was a little girl thirteen years old, and now her own little Lois was that same age. Clay had helped her arrange the flowers that day, and a sad, sweet memory it made to all of them as she spoke of it.

"Oh, the homes made by loving hands on earth are not our eternal ones," the old doctor said. "But this old place and these preparations bring memories which are bitter sweet."

The trips that day to the Elms, reminded Floy so vividly of other days, that tears sprang into her eyes. Through the orchard—yet the same, though new trees

took the place of the ones she used to climb—across the meadow, how often she had come at even-tide to greet him whose grave out in the church-yard she yet visited and often put fresh bouquets upon. And memory chastened by years and softened by happy home-scenes brought thoughts that lifted her heart leagues nearer heaven.

Grant was busy that day, papering, cleaning the yard and arranging things about the cottage at the Elms, and he did not notice the mysterious proceedings down the road.

When Gwen drove down to the station to meet Linn, a happy surprise was disclosed in the person of Col. Lockridge who had been sent cards but was hardly expected. He laughingly said to Will who grasped his hand warmly: "You see I came to see all your children married; you saw the last of mine settled. Then the lady is the daughter of our little hospital friend. No, I haven't forgotten her." The Colonel, though with dignified bearing and unbroken health, was showing the trace of trouble and the track of years; his wife slept the long sleep now; his business life was comparatively closed and he lived among his children, of whom Linn was the youngest.

Aunt Polly was considerably worried next morning at the cloudy appearance of the sky; but, by ten o'clock, the sun shone out and at noon-day only a few clouds could be seen—as few as married life could be hoped to contain. But neither Aunt Polly nor any other guest was viewing the sky, for in the pretty parlors of the Edwards home—parlors improvised for the occasion by the sitting-room, spare bedroom, and parlor

all being thrown together—the guests had assembled, received by some of Jennie's special girl friends.

Gwen played the Wedding March, and Grant and Jennie came down with a few special friends who had been allowed a last word with her before she assumed her new title.

Very beautiful she looked, as was fitting and expected; curious eyes were satisfied with the dress, but some nudges were exchanged. "It must have cost an awful sum," was said in many knowing looks. It was plain but rich; her father would insist and Jennie couldn't resist—white silk skirt with white plush redingote; her only ornament a bunch of forget-me-nots in her hair, and at her throat a tiny locket Lois had kept among her "girlhood treasures" until that morning. It bore the inscription:

"WARD M., U. S. HOSPITAL. ST. LOUIS, MO., 1863."

Gwen called Col. Lockridge's attention to it and the old gentleman was much pleased.

Few and simple were the words which contained the sacred vow. In the deep hush the minister's "I pronounce you man and wife," sounded solemn indeed—but it had a glad ring to it, to Grant's ears—the waiting was o'er; his wife stood beside him; he turned, and gently, almost reverently, kissed her. Dinner was served at once, as Jennie had planned, to prevent the trying scene of congratulations from all her guests in one string.

Six young men, selected from the particular friends of Grant and Jennie, served. A merry afternoon they spent in music and games, in which both old and young joined heartily; then the carriages and buggies were

brought out, and the company accompanied Grant and Jennie to the Elms whither the Morris party had preceded them.

The reception was a cordial one; though Jennie did not feel it was home exactly, she felt the genuineness of the welcome. After a superb supper had been served, the guests returned to the handsomely decorated parlors and an evening long to be remembered began.

Grant sang the solo, "My Queen," while Jennie accompanied him on the piano—a new article of furniture, Will's present to Grace—and Mother Lois indulged in a little cry in the back parlor.

Once, while the voices of Linn and Gwen rang out in harmony in a grand duet, Col. Lockridge turned to Will, and a company of kindred spirits who had drifted together, and said: "That's the way Morris and I jumped accounts. But the question still remains—who's the debtor?"

"I made a rash vow, you see, ladies and gentlemen; when in the hospital I told him to ask what he would and 'twas his. I noticed then a quizzical twinkle in his eye that I half distrusted; but never dreamed he meant to demand my only daughter."

"But, you see, I gave him a son"—began the Colonel.

"Yes; then whisked them both away to your Illinois home; but, in memory of Chattanooga I'll call it square if you will—shake!" and the hands clasped warmly.

"Grant," called Will, thinking this an opportune moment, though Grant was busily talking to Aunt Floy and Mame Riley, who had naturally drifted together

—"I thought, perhaps, as you were starting out on your own responsibilities to-night," Grant bowed low though wondering what the joke was—"we had better settle our accounts." Then Grant did look puzzled.

"Why there's plenty of time to settle that, if there is any difference between us." The crowd had heard enough whispered from those in the secret to be thoroughly interested by this time; and Jennie began to suspect a capital joke, as she and Gwen, locked arm in arm, joined the group.

"No; I'm anxious to have it over—if this will suit you we'll call it square," and Will's face shone with unalloyed pleasure, as he thrust the deed into Grant' hands.

It was Grant's turn to be astonished now. And the company all found out what it was and began shouting —"Speech!" "Speech!" "Grant!" "Grant!" before he realized the situation.

"I don't understand what you mean?" then, with Jennie, ran his eyes over the page "The old home! Oh, my father"—and the voice broke down.

"This gift is too much—there was no debt"—he began again.

"Twill balance the mortgage, perhaps; take the team for interest," cried Will excitedly, his face fairly glowing with smiles. "Your cottage you will find all ready for you, furnished and equipped, waiting its mistress."

"Good! that explains why my mother was away from home so much of late, and where the table linens I missed have gone," said Jennie. "That's just splendid!"

"But father, the new cottage, here," said Grant trying to collect his scattered senses."

"It's rented; your own home will need your attention."

"Father, how can I ever thank you?" said Grant with emotion.

"Don't try it," responded Will jubilantly. "Uncle Sam did it all! I never could have repaid you, had he not given me the lift—boost I might say."

Cries of "Hurrah for Uncle Sam!" "Long live Uncle Sam!" came from the crowd.

"Uncle Sam owed it to you, and more than he can ever pay in dollars and cents," said old Judge Burton coming forward and grasping Will's left hand. "The brave, loyal citizens who turned their backs upon weeping families and pleasant homes to preserve this Union can never be paid, but if their suffering can be assuaged, a grateful nation comes and reaches a hand to help her preservers! Uncle Sam is still the debtor."

"Never! Don't slander Uncle Sam! He's done his part in giving what he has, and providing peace, prosperity and happy homes to an intelligent, sturdy, loyal people."

"That's so. The Union forever!" said Grant as he kissed his wife.

"Let's draw the red lines across the accounts and mark them balanced," said Will; "and let's all sing, 'Three cheers for the Red, White and Blue.'"

THE END

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